# THIS DARK AGE

*A manual for life in the modern world*

Volume 2:

The Confrontation Between Man and Evil

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I have often played with man, God says. But what a game, it is a game which makes me tremble yet.

I have often played with man but…it was in order to save him, and I have trembled enough because I might not be able to save him…

I often play against man, God says, but it is he who wants to lose, the idiot, and it is I who want him to win.

And I succeed sometimes,

In making him win.

~ Charles Péguy

# CONTENTS

THE DUTY OF CONFRONTATION.....1

*General remarks. The scope of this discussion. When the traditional precepts are not apt. Allowing for the diversity of spiritual vocations. The absurdity of non-resistance as a general principle. We can resist inner evil even when overcome by it. Request for tolerance, demand for approval. Humanism and the conscience. Shame as betrayal. Non-resistance to evil is not strength. Where is evil situated? Moral evil is always personal. The body as participation in the material order. We all participate in evil.*

COMPULSION AND CONSENT ..... 26

*The concept of inducement. Parenting and inducement. Coercion and compulsion as types of inducement. When does inducement become violence? The dual criteria of love and spiritual insight. The greater the spiritual insight, the greater the prerogative of the lover. Violence is always wrong. Secular powers and just war. The line between healthy and abusive inducement. The question of external assistance. Reciprocal moral education is inescapable. The difference between childhood and adulthood. Individualism and socialization. The externalization of the spiritual life. Physical compulsion and restraint. For the sake of free will and not against it. This is not a defense for current forms of compulsion. Some apparent difficulties involved in the use of physical force. Man against himself. We cannot wait for consent. False equivalence between attacker and defender. Free speech as mental coercion.*

LOVE AND LIBERTY..... 53

*Evil proliferates through tolerance. Private acts have social consequences. Conditions for the use of physical force.*

*Physical compulsion cannot force a mental result. The nature of spiritual love. Errors of compassion. The limit of love. Communion is inescapable. To ignore this is not to avoid it. There is no purely private good or evil. Conclusions based on the communal nature of good and evil. Moral education is a public duty. The importance of a shared vision of the good. Worship of liberty ends up justifying abuse. There is no neutrality. Evil is by nature aggressive. Evil makes use of all means. The tragic encounter. Inherited victory and squandered social capital. Persuasion and inducement.*

VOCATION AND CONFRONTATION ..... 76

*The warrior and the teacher. Great spiritual teachers demonstrate the exception. The problem of the idealist. The victories of non-violent movements. Different worlds of meaning. The religious view and the humanist view. The warrior sacrifices himself both physically and morally. The example of the executioner. The warrior does not possess righteousness. The paralysis of the perfectionist. Righteous killing is a fantasy. The humility of the fighter is what saves him. War spiritually distorts everyone involved. Moral heroism cannot be the norm. Military service is not a direct road to heroism. The perks of military service. The problem of the idealization of the military. Anything less than perfect is distasteful.*

THE SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE ..... 95

*The immediately feasible or the impossible perfect. Justice and morality are not coextensive. The spiritual compromise. The spiritual compromise is inherent in the human experience. The doctrine of the fall and ritual absolution. The monk also makes the spiritual compromise. The danger of absolute justifications for the use of force. The sword is a duty, not a prerogative. Those who live by the sword die by the sword. To hide from the sword is to invite evil. Only the strong. The conscience is not deadened but sharpened. Legitimate departures from moral perfection. The necessary spiritual cleansing. We must be very careful adapting traditional teachings in the present. Heroism as an opportunity for transcendence. Caste regression and the evolution of war. The samurai and the Way beyond*

*righteousness. Holy War and the Crusades. Only the lesser war remains. The real enemy and the real victory. Warning against vigilante violence.*

MILITARY HISTORY AND THEORY.....125

*General remarks. Universal conscription and the return of the armed horde. The necessity of propaganda. Ancient limits on the size of armies through the decline of the Greeks. The military characteristics of Rome. Military campaigns in the Middle Ages. The enemy and the Enemy. The importance of moral unity for society. The arrival of the musket. Superior firepower through rank and file. The 18th century prejudice against quantity. Remnants of medieval cosmopolitanism. The French Revolution, Rousseau, and the dawn of mass war. Democracy makes men cheap. Changes in the military during the French Revolution. The discovery of the skirmishing line and the divisional system. Problems of supply. The institutionalization of propaganda. Victory by transgression. The lightning march and problems of supply. The object of war is a better peace. Prussia as heir to the mass army. Nationalism and the Napoleons of business. Carl von Clausewitz and the golden age of military theory. A few technological developments. Problems for the offensive. The American Civil War. The blockade as the precursor to war on noncombatants. The specter of trench warfare emerges. Closing remarks on the Civil War.*

THE AGE OF WORLD WARS .....175

*World War I and the culmination of mass war. The continuous front and the invention of the home front. Hello home front, goodbye non-combatant. World War I by the numbers. Respect for the conquered. The League of Nations and the illusion of moral authority. Growth of war means the growth of state power. Aerial warfare in the peaceful interim. Theoretical alternatives to mass war. World War II and the limit of escalation. Mechanization and blitzkrieg and the front in motion. The extremes of aerial bombardment and the decisive use of the atomic bomb. The military industrial complex. The irrelevance of the armed horde. The nature of guerilla warfare. Guerilla warfare misinterpreted. Urban guerillas and the phenomenon of terrorism. Yasser Arafat's PLO and possibilities of effective terrorism. Osama bin Laden,*

*al-Qaeda, and the Islamist project. Modern media and the distaste for casualties. Guerillas, terrorists, and freedom fighters. The problem of uncertainty. The problem of friction. The example of Japan's reversion to the sword.*

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MODERN SOLDIER ..... 219

*Not every man is a soldier. Basic training or basic conditioning? Basic training is re-socialization. Mass military in the absence of a traditional rite of passage. The machinery is so good that just about anybody will suffice as raw material. Failure is an option but it is harder than you think. When soldiers won't fire and the necessity of conditioning. Fight, flight, posture, submit. Civil war posturing and the Battle of Gettysburg. The psychiatric casualty and the myth of easy killing. Other situations with low psychiatric casualty rates. Endurance and exhaustion as addressed by military training. The importance of reserves. Inoculation against hate. How we use distance to overcome aversion to killing. The language of war as social distancing. Technology has extended the spectrum for distance killing. Personal remorse for personal killing. Better to surrender early than late. Tactical utility of the bayonet, its use and disuse. Authority in the military and in society. Following orders and the necessity of confident command. The Lost Battalion and the burden of command. Non-compliance is nearly inconceivable. Accountability and combat. Anonymity and group absolution. Mechanical distance and killing. Moral distance and cultural distance. Legal justification. On covering one's head during surrender. Atrocity and its uses. What happened to soldiers in Vietnam? Vietnam and the impossibility of reconciling the experience. The absence of expiation rituals in secular society. PTSD as the legacy of Vietnam. Doctrines that attempt to prevent another Vietnam, and their futility.*

WOMEN IN COMBAT..... 271

*The myth of the female warrior. Women commanders. Women as revolutionaries. The weaker vessel. Weakness in action. Female participation extinguishes the glory of male pursuits. Men won't surrender to women. Social prestige of activities diminishes as women enter into them. World War II and the nuclear stalemate. The case of Israel and the*

*conscription of women. The consequences of integration. The myth of the platonic or 'professional' relationship. Pregnant soldiers and the privilege of desertion. The privileged sex. Sexual harassment and sexism. Alternative career paths for the male soldier.*

# THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN MAN AND EVIL

# THE DUTY OF CONFRONTATION

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### *General remarks.*

The cardinal sin of the modern world is *indifference*. Not indifference toward everything, but *indifference toward everything that matters most to the human condition*.

A society that worships liberty with such pseudo-religious zeal could not be any other way. Liberty, strictly speaking, is a purely negative value. It does not deal in positive determinations of what is worthwhile and honorable, but rather in the *absence of restraint*, and this is diametrically opposed to concepts like goodness, beauty, and truth, all of which act as *narrowing principles* that place strict limits on how we act.

The consequences of such a reversal of the traditional outlook are far-reaching. With liberty as the supreme value, it was necessary to exile religion from public life, followed in short order by the exile of morality altogether. Conversations about sin and righteousness, vice and virtue, are anachronistic for us. Tolerance, the only *liberal* virtue, is what defines good citizenship.

What does such a society have to say about the menace of *evil*? Nothing, it seems, except in an inverted sense. Citizenship consists in not noticing what your neighbors are up to. In such a sociopathic dystopia, the real enemy of society is the one who publicly professes any objective notion of what constitutes goodness, and insists upon it, accompanying that profession with a serious intention to realize that good in the external world and to protect himself from influences to the contrary.

Since we find ourselves unavoidably enmeshed in such a bizarre social context, we thought it good to outline a theory, not of evil in itself, but of *resistance to evil*. We hope to alleviate the timidity that is nurtured in all modern men who have been trained to think that the 'private evils' they witness are none of their concern, that the things they hold most dear should never be spoken out loud, and that, in the face of licentiousness, greed, intemperance, and malice, they are called upon to do nothing but mind their own business.

This theory of resistance is intended to reverse a lifelong education in spinelessness.

We will discuss the nature of evil as a social force, insofar as it is corrosive to the character of the individual and to the community as a whole. We will discern with as much clarity as possible the means by which, and the extremes to which, this evil can be resisted without offending the dignity and self-direction of our neighbors.

### *The scope of this discussion.*

Evil is encountered by every person without exception, both internally and externally, individually and collectively, and so deserves careful consideration as to what it is and how it is to be dealt with.

We will begin by discussing the problem of evil as it directly confronts each of us *personally*, and then proceed to the more *public* and *social* extremes of this confrontation. Specifically, we will consider how this confrontation, on the social front, is exemplified in the office of the judge, the police officer, the public executioner, and the professional soldier.

To cover such a broad field, it is important that we lay for ourselves a solid foundation. To start, we will need to propose some definitions that will function as a conceptual framework. We will also address some of the more problematic and often naïve arguments that are commonly encountered today, in order to set them aside as early as possible.

When it comes to dividing evil into separate types or 'degrees', we will utilize the vocabulary of the Catholic tradition, wherein evil is roughly divided into three categories:

1. Metaphysical evil, which concerns the inherent limitations of anything situated in the finite order, and which, based on these limitations alone, cause the creature to fall short of absolute perfection of the Creator. Anything that is *not God* will necessarily manifest some degree of metaphysical evil.

2. Physical evil, which has to do with the conditions of the natural world insofar as they injure or place limitations on human flourishing. Sickness and death are obvious examples, but even mental anguish insofar as it is due to the natural limits of human intelligence, for example the fear

that comes from our inability to fully understand the world around us, are examples of physical evil since they arise from the nature of the human condition itself.

3. Moral evil, which deals with human volition and its many deviations from the good. Moral evil deals in prescriptions for conduct since any human action is a direct result of the movements of the will, and immoral conduct is therefore a manifestation of a will that is not in conformity with goodness and truth.

Having outlined this tripartite framework, we can say that things are only going to become more complicated from here on out. This is because at the moral level, and when dealing with any question of moral evil, it is also possible to discern the presence or influence of metaphysical or natural evil. Thus, the temptation to explain away moral evil as an illusion, and to situate everything within one of the other categories. This happens, for example, when some vices are called congenital—present from birth—or purely a result of social conditions. In both cases what we see is *confusion between moral evil and physical evil.*

Given the complexity of the question of evil, then, let us specify our purpose here:

*We will not deal with the methodology or psychology of spiritual development.* Our work here will not resemble anything like the writings of the Carmelite masters or the desert fathers, concerned as they were with the psychology and technique of inner moral work via the prayer life. Our aim is much more modest, and is not, strictly speaking, intended as a guide for moral improvement, but is more a theoretical framework and justification for the moral duty to combat evil whenever we encounter it.

Our intent is *not* so much to philosophize about evil in the abstract, asking ourselves what distinguishes it conceptually and metaphysically from *the Good*. We have dealt with evil in its 'cosmic' aspect elsewhere in this manual, and at length. We are not, therefore, trying to investigate the problems of metaphysical and physical evil, although as we already said, it will be necessary to mention them and move freely between all three levels. It is therefore a question of *emphasis*, and our emphasis here is on evil in its *moral* dimension. We intend to focus on what we have called

the *confrontation* between man and evil *as an aspect of lived experience*.

We will address questions such as the duty of individuals to combat evil, both privately and publicly, and we will go so far as to determine how and why the use of force is legitimate when defending oneself, one's family, and the community from abuse.

These are delicate questions that require nuanced responses, and like so many difficult problems, when discussed publicly and politically, they tend to be subjected to drastic over-simplification. Because of this, if we dwell on seemingly minor distinctions, it should be understood that our purpose is to undo the confusion that surrounds these issues today. This requires first and foremost that we understand both the gravity and the complexity of everything that is at stake. We are not trying to 'muddy the waters'—the waters are already as muddy as they could possibly be.

### *When the traditional precepts are not apt.*

Generally speaking, we take as our point of departure the doctrinal framework proposed by the traditional religions. This means that often we adopt traditional precepts as our own, and we advise the reader to act accordingly. However, this is not always possible when the contemporary context is so far removed from the traditional one that the precept does not serve the good and might even undermine it. There is some truth to the saying 'When in Rome…' Traditional *principles* are timeless. They are what they are and cannot change, since they enunciate the truth itself. Traditional *precepts for action,* however, are contingent and belong to time and place. When in doubt, uphold the traditional precept, but when in the presence of conditions that are not traditional, it is sometimes necessary that a readaptation occur in which case the traditional precept is restated even set aside.

This is uniquely true with our current subject, especially regarding its relevance to the warrior. We do study the traditional teachings regarding the warrior vocation, but when it comes to *applying* the traditional teachings in the modern context, we proceed only with great caution. In fact, in most of our discussion on this subject, we will steer away from those ancient precepts and only return to them occasionally and at the end, at which point we will recapitulate the traditional approach and explain its relation to the present.

The reader should therefore not be surprised if we neglect to mention the advice given by Japanese sages to the Samurai, nor will we explain in detail the *warrior ascesis* of the medieval Crusaders.

This will seem strange. After all, is not our stated purpose always to revitalize the traditional wisdom in the man of today? The obstacle here is that the vocations of yesterday are gone. Not only have the traditional paths been hidden (if not demolished) but, to make matters worse, they have been replaced by *pseudo-vocations*, which operate under the same name as the ancient counterpart but are of a different spirit. This is especially true of the warrior vocation. To act out the traditional precepts within the context of the modern counterfeit would be disastrous. It would be like mistaking a Satanic 'black mass' for a Catholic Mass and then trying to attend to the former as if it were the latter. Such would be the result of an attempt to live out the vocation of the Knights Templar within the context of the modern military.

We are presented with a twofold difficulty:

1) We must correct certain errors about the nature of evil, where it is situated, how it is resisted, and by what means, according to the traditional wisdom about man and his vocation.

2) We must guard against the delusional idea that *modern* men could and should act according to the same guidelines as a medieval knight or a samurai.

All of the advice offered to the traditional warrior type was offered within the context of a *traditional civilization*, with all that this implies. The traditional world provided a cultural ambience and a concrete social structure outside of which the guidelines for certain vocations lose their spiritual or moral efficacy. Add to this the necessity of *religious supports*, supports not to be imagined as *a merely private pursuit* but, on the contrary, incorporated into all levels of social life providing the backdrop for lived experience. All of these factors are necessary to the *living out* of the warrior vocation, since any vocation is more than just a set of ideas or bits of advice.

In contemporary civilization, all of the aforementioned necessities have been systematically excluded. In comparison to the traditional warrior, the modern man is more like an astronaut launched into

space without oxygen, without a tether, and without any instruments for navigation. This absence of spiritual guidance is offered under the banner of 'freedom' and is a highly esteemed form of moral suicide. For this reason, it would be foolish to simply reiterate the ancient teachings on warfare and the warrior vocation, since these counsels can only ever be *preparatory* to a life lived *in situ*.

Counsels are offered to a certain person in a certain time and place, and the actions counseled cannot be realized without regard to those factors. To load a modern man's mind with traditional maxims and then launch him into a completely non-traditional world is a recipe for *moral and spiritual disaster* both for him and for anyone he encounters. At the very least, it will encourage naivety.

None of this implies that the traditional wisdom is or was misguided when it comes to principles, or that it cannot serve as our light and guide. Rather, it sets up our hermeneutic approach in order to avoid any romantic naivety or ideological nonsense.

And so, again, our task is to expose the lies of the modern world while at the same time harboring no delusions about the limits imposed by modern civilization on the spiritual possibilities of its people.

Now, to speak of combat in particular:

In what follows, we assume that although there was certainly, at one time, a path to spiritual realization via combat, and a true warrior ascesis, we suggest that this path, in the absence of the traditional world that maintained it, has become ruinous and mostly *inaccessible*. Just as it would be catastrophic to promote medieval feudalism as an appropriate social organization for today, so also it would be dangerously misguided to try and propose the model of the Knights Templar for emulation by modern military organizations.

As always, the traditional doctrines are of value as an *illustration* of true principles, as a way of helping us to discern what is true and what is false in whatever options present themselves to us today. Traditional *applications* of the doctrine, on the other hand, can be relative.

### *Allowing for the diversity of spiritual vocations.*

As always, oversimplification is the enemy. We cannot offer one answer for everyone. Remember that humanity is not homogenous, and we should be very cautious about how we articulate universal norms for behavior. It is not universality itself that should scare us, for the good is of course universal, and has an objective structure that is what it is always and everywhere. There are certain actions which are always incompatible with the pursuit of this universal good, and so it is possible to make universal statements about moral conduct, but these prescriptions can easily become too narrow. Typically we need to stop short of *contingent applications*. For example, we can state that man *always* has an obligation to pursue the good, but beyond that we can only proceed with numerous qualifications that take into account the spiritual type we are dealing with, which is to say the actual person situated within time and place. The pursuit of the good will manifest itself with nuances according to context and the spiritual aptitude of the individual. We cannot ignore the diversity of spiritual temperaments found in man and the differences in vocation that they imply without creating a caricature. In fact, the political and philosophical documents that speak most highly of 'Man' without context and in the abstract are the ones that have done the most violence to anthropology.

Especially as to the question of resistance to evil by force, whether it is permissible, and to what degree it might even be obligatory to take another person's life—these are difficult questions to which there is no one-size-fits-all solution. We can say that *in principle* lethal force can be used to resist evil, but this is almost meaningless in itself, since we have not said *for whom, against whom*, and *under what conditions* lethal force may be used, and since, outside these undetermined conditions, lethal force would be emphatically prohibited.

We must emphasize that this is not only a question of so-called cultural relativism or diversity, but of the deep difference in spiritual temperament that we find between individuals themselves. Two men might choose opposite paths in the face of the same evil: one might take up the sword and fight, another might turn the other cheek. We cannot immediately determine which of them acted appropriately, since the appropriateness of the response depends not only on the demands of the concrete situation but on the inner condition of the actor. What would be courage for one man might be

cowardice for another, and an act that would vanquish evil in one context might fuel it in another.

Does this mean that our discussion is futile since we cannot easily offer 'categorical' prescriptions? The relativists would like us to believe so, and frequently this is used as a cheap way of dismissing the whole question. But just because a question is nuanced and difficult does not mean that it cannot be faced at all. It only means that we need to take care not to oversimplify, not to be superficial, not to be hasty in absolutizing.

First and foremost, the difficulty of the question means that we must be honest about the *inequality* of individuals since, as will become clear, even among men who share the warrior vocation, the extremes of resistance can only be faced by those possessing courage, spiritual clarity, and a properly formed conscience. This territory is spiritually dangerous to an extreme, over and above any element of physical danger that might also be involved.

Although every person lives on the battlefield where the struggle takes place, the 'front' at which we are stationed, the role we play, the means we deploy, and the extremes to which we allow ourselves to go, must be guided by an honest appraisal of the virtues we do (and do not) possess. We say again that the resistance to evil manifested by individuals, while 'categorical' in the sense of being obligatory, will vary in its form.

The answer we propose, therefore, must be sophisticated, far more sophisticated than most public debates can admit. Any kind of vagueness, flattery, or ideological sentimentality must be excluded. At the very same time, we will warn the reader that our response, ultimately, will not be as clean or as comforting as that which is offered by the various competing ideologies of today. Such is the nature of things, that at times there is 'no good answer' and we must act and speak and live despite the absence of comfortable certainties.

### *The absurdity of non-resistance as a general principle.*

Non-resistance to evil, as a general principle and *without extensive qualification*, is completely untenable and can exist only in the imagination. Even the most naïve sentimentalists do not really advocate for such a thing, and we suspect that most of the people who speak as if they do advocate it are only speaking simplistically

and don't really mean what they say. Nonetheless, since we have committed ourselves to precision, we will briefly explain why an *unqualified* non-resistance is absurd.

Remember that evil is experienced both internally and externally, so that it assails us as if it were an aspect of our own will and via the wills of other persons, and so non-resistance taken in a general sense would have to be applied to both orders of experience, internal and external.

Taking the world of the inner life first, what would non-resistance look like? It would mean that all temptations we encountered, all unhealthy passions we experienced, all perverse impulses we felt, were to be granted our unconditional assent and gratified more or less immediately. It would mean total surrender to whatever vicious thought beckoned. Every evil that appealed to our imperfect nature would be permitted to run its course *in us* and—just as importantly—run its course *through us* and into the world outside.

This kind of non-resistance would amount to a kind of voluntary self-corruption, since the experience of passion and temptation is relentless in life. What began as an *occasional* surrender and as 'turning the other cheek' to one's own demons would end in conquest, since it is undeniable that habitual surrender to a passion transforms our very psyche in conformity with that passion. And since our deliberate actions in the external world are determined by our interior states, this internal perversion would spill over into our daily lives.

This last point is important: the evil we permit to infect our inner lives is by no means confined to that world but must *of necessity* actualize itself in our relations with others, and so again we say that any evil that takes root *in us* will eventually express itself *through us*, and become *social evil*. Here we can already see what will become more and more obvious throughout our discussion—that there is no such thing as purely *private* sin, sin that concerns no one else but the sinner.

Regarding this kind of *unqualified internal non-resistance,* we can ask how many people actually argue for such a thing. Some—but not many. Aside from these few psychopaths, some people speak as if they were arguing for it, but it is likely that most of them do not take their own slogans literally and are merely displaying a lack of specificity in their words. What they more often have in mind is non-

resistance to *external* evil. We will address that in turn, but here we can conclude that it is nearly impossible to imagine anyone implementing *total* non-resistance in all spheres without descending immediately into madness.

### *We can resist inner evil even when overcome by it.*

We have just observed that most arguments for non-resistance have in mind its external manifestations only, since the alternative would amount to the abolition of the conscience altogether. All of us, insofar as we possess an intact conscience, experience evil and respond with some degree of resistance to its influence.

Even when we are momentarily conquered by our appetites—even when we give way to a strong passion through anger or deceit or lust—at the very same time we are often disgusted with the evil we see manipulating us, and we hate ourselves for being so weak-willed as to be overcome in this way. The same is true for moral defeats that are not momentary but on-going, as in the case of addiction, provided the addict sincerely wishes to be free of his condition.

This is not to say that everyone always feels this healthy disgust when in the presence of their own inner evil. An individual with a malformed or habitually suppressed conscience might not experience this at all. But speaking generally and in terms of the *experiential norm*, we can say that even when we let evil take control of our inner workings, we are simultaneously *resisting* it by means of a *negative response* of some kind, however weak this response might be.

We could illustrate the point by saying that in any war, it is wrong to conclude that the losing party did not fight at all simply because they were defeated in this or that battle.

To extend the analogy further and illustrate a related point, it is one thing to fight and be overcome by a stronger force despite our best efforts at resistance, and quite another thing to lose by throwing down your weapons and refusing to fight in the first place, which, in the moral life, is what non-resistance would typically mean. Both examples involve defeat, both for the one who fought and the one who did not, but there is a world of difference between these two *defeats*, even if it is sometimes very difficult to tell, from the outside, which one we are observing in a particular case.

All of that is to say that when it comes to the moral life, the conflicts of the heart are no simple matter, and it is no argument in favor of non-resistance to observe that each and every one of us is at times (or even frequently) defeated by it.

### *Request for tolerance, demand for approval.*

One of the more insidious dangers of non-resistance to evil, even taken in its more qualified external sense, is that this approach, which very often presents itself under the slogan of *tolerance*, will not settle for that alone, but eventually demands *approval*. The difference between toleration and approval is stark, but the transformation from one to the other is seamless and follows an impeccable logic.

Insofar as the *spiritually sighted* person recognizes evil as evil, he finds it repulsive. He cannot avoid finding it repulsive, and he cannot subdue this response simply through an act of will. It is part of his nature to respond in this way and he cannot easily override it. The only way for a man to stop experiencing disgust in the face of evil is to stop recognizing it as such. To do this, he must lie to himself, and not only lie to himself but be convinced by his lies.

In other words, he must distort his own spiritual vision in such a way as to see evil as *good*. He must become spiritually blind. *This is the only way that a human being can look upon evil and smile*.

Since the whole business of religion is to clarify and sharpen spiritual vision, it is obvious that the concept of tolerance puts religious people in an impossible position. According to the principle of tolerance, they are taught to build up in themselves an unnatural *blindness* or *desensitization* to evil so that they can face evil and not feel what must naturally be felt in its presence. They must experience evil but not respond to it as such.

Moreover, what is at first justified as an exception must, in practice, become habitual, since evil is not exceptional but is rather omnipresent. The more we are required to 'turn a blind eye' to it and permit it to move freely around us and in close contact with us, the more we must train ourselves not to be repulsed by it.

This is the natural course of things. It is no exaggeration to say that spiritual blindness is the inevitable end of this form of non-

resistance, but we must also observe that it is a progressive blindness, and that it develops *by degrees*.

The various degrees of this self-blinding appear in the form of 'coping mechanisms'—psychological techniques—designed to help those who have not yet learned *not to see*. One common example of such coping mechanisms is the habit of *minimizing* evil. If we are forced to look at evil and cannot avoid looking at it, we will naturally try to veil it somewhat, to shield our eyes from its darkness, to blur the image, and we might do this by rationalizing it away as much as possible. We make excuses for it, we admit only one or two of its many features but ignore others, anything we can do in order to achieve *partial blindness*, and in this way we are able to co-exist with evil without constantly suffering from the exposure.

Again, these coping mechanisms must arise on pain of psychological crisis. We all possess a desire to live in the presence of beauty, truth, and goodness. If we find ourselves in the midst of ugliness, and if we cannot do anything about it, or if our own misguided ideology dictates that we must not do anything about it, we will naturally try to convince ourselves that this ugliness is not so ugly after all. Perhaps we might even tell ourselves (or let others tell us) that the ugliness is in ourselves, in some deformity of conscience, and not in the evil we thought we perceived.

Once the option to resist evil is removed from the picture, we are left with only one option: we alter our spiritual perception—we *blindfold* the conscience—so that we can avoid seeing evil for what it is, even if this veiling of the conscience is an act of self-deceit amounting to spiritual self-abuse.

What else could a person be expected to do? We must live, after all. And so we lie to ourselves and say that this evil is perhaps not really evil, and we find many justifications to help us lie in this way, many of them provided by the apologists of non-resistance.

Taking for granted the human desire to live in the presence of beauty and goodness, what can we say of the person who has finally succeeded in *ignoring* evil, who can say with a straight face and a *silent conscience* that an evil object is not in fact evil after all? The desire to experience the good is still present, and so we naturally begin to try to 'see the good' in the world as we experience it. We began by whitewashing the evil that confronted us, and we ended by repainting it as a real *good*. This process of *baptizing evil* amounts

to the *inversion* of our spiritual discernment so that evil becomes good, all to avoid the agony of a life wherein we are told that we must look the devil in the face and say nothing, do nothing—just nod and step aside.

Non-resistance becomes tolerance, tolerance becomes acceptance, acceptance becomes approval, and approval becomes cooperation. We cannot stress this enough—he who preaches non-resistance to evil *necessarily* becomes its accomplice.

It is easy to anticipate objections, especially within the contemporary political climate which cannot stand to hear anyone mention any moral standard whatsoever in public. Do we really need to condemn evil in order to stand fast against it? Is it not possible to hold a belief and yet refrain from its verbal expression? All this talk about internal surrender is unnecessary—no one is asking us to surrender internally, but only to restrain the external expression of resistance, which we are free to carry out within ourselves.

In response, we would say that things are not so simple, and that man is composed of mind and body and the two are not so easily separable. To discipline oneself to remain silent when one feels compelled to speak has consequences for the inner life; it is a kind of *training* and a *habituating*. Talking oneself out of voicing our objections is no small thing. This silence or inaction, when implemented as a general principle, really forces us to talk ourselves out of having the objections in the first place. This involves a re-education, and the quieting of a voice which, if quieted too often, ceases to speak and eventually forgets how to speak.

By convincing ourselves to be tolerant and to 'see the beauty in everyone and everything' we pervert our own spiritual vision until it becomes spiritual blindness. The original aversion ceases to be felt and we reach a point where we sincerely believe that evil is not evil, at which point evil is indistinguishable from goodness, and lies take on the same value as truth. If this seems like an exaggeration, we need only poll a contemporary audience and see how many of them believe that 'morality is relative', that 'we cannot judge', etc., and that we have no business trying to determine what is right or wrong in any objective sense. The results of this poll would speak for themselves.

Let it be said in plain terms: to force someone not to act or speak in accordance with their sense of right and wrong is a kind of violence against them, since it chokes and destroys a fundamental aspect of their humanity, and in the end, it amounts to a kind of moral brainwashing.

This is why the disciples of immorality fight first and foremost for the simple 'freedom' to exist untrammeled, and why, in the beginning, all they ask is to be 'merely tolerated'. For in the end, this is all that is needed to secure victory. Once firmly established and able to move and act freely, the battle is almost over, and anyone who would stand in their way has been effectively disarmed.

Once that is accomplished, evil switches its approach. It ceases to ask for the humble freedom to exist, and what was first a timid request or tolerance becomes an aggressive demand for explicit approval. Even disagreement is not tolerated. Any expressed *distaste* for the evil must now be criminalized. The people are not asked simply to tolerate, but to condone, and to do otherwise is to suffer serious social consequences and is labeled as 'hate'.

Like it or not, if we accept the existence of morality at all, we accept the fact that good and evil will always be in conflict. There is no 'live and let live' in the moral sphere. There is no such thing as 'tolerance' unless we first become nihilists. A society that preaches tolerance smuggles nihilism under the guise of good will.

The consequences for religion are dire. Any social order that pretends to permit men to follow religion while simultaneously demanding that they become morally neutral is to place them in an impossible position, asked to believe and to deny their belief, to live but not to live meaningfully, to speak the truth while lying. Ultimately, to demand that a person immersed in society not show resistance to evil and in the same breath tell them that they are free to pursue the good is like tossing a person into the sea and telling them that they are free to live as they wish, but are not allowed to swim.

### *Humanism and the conscience.*

Humanism presents man as noble *by nature*. This tenet is not always explicit, but humanism always takes humanity as a starting point and argues that man, in and of himself and without reference to his fallen nature and the corresponding need for salvation, can

choose values and live a good and meaningful life. This could not be so unless man was good by nature and able to grasp the good by his own lights. To recall the Catholic schema presented at the beginning of this section, we can say that humanism tends to view moral evil as a direct consequence of physical evil (disease, social conditions, etc.) and to deny that the moral problem, although influenced by physical factors, is situated in the soul of the human will and cannot be addressed merely by analyzing physical factors.

In the humanist anthropology, if it can be said to have an anthropology at all, the conscience is a given, a power bequeathed by nature to each person as a sufficient and functional guide to moral truth, like a compass that cannot but point north. The assumption seems to be that we possess the conscience in the same way that we possess the heart or lungs, and that this instrument is unwaveringly accurate except, of course, for those cases where religion or some other artificial and negative external influence disfigures or interferes with it. This view conveniently dispenses with the need for a spiritual education since that sort of intervention would only derail the natural function of the conscience.

For the traditionalist, on the other hand, it is precisely the *education of the conscience* that renders it reliable and trustworthy. It is possessed in some degree by everyone but always requires development. It must be *trained* or else it will begin to atrophy, leaving the individual with a conscience that is stunted, suppressed, and malformed.

What humanism has always ignored, to the detriment of humanity, is that the conscience needs *formation*, and due to the nature of the conscience, this implies a moral education. In other words, the proper formation of the conscience depends on the intervention and influence of certain external authorities, such as religion, which are the very authorities humanism detests. According to humanism, which is as optimistic as it is naïve, man needs to be sufficient unto himself. He cannot *need* the correction and education provided by any ancient institution.

To put it another way, we could say that, due to the fact that the conscience is indeed present in everyone, this moral and spiritual education takes place *no matter what*, and that it is more a question of whether it takes place with or without guidance, whether it is a good education or a bad one. The conscience will undergo formation, one way or another.

The whole task of spiritual education consists in learning to recognize the good, in defining the boundaries of the good with respect to the inner life of the soul, and, once that holy ground is staked out, constructing the inner temple, erecting its defenses, and in learning to identify and repel whatever would desecrate it. It is a matter not just of learning to *see* spiritual truth, but also of moral *fortification* and *defense*. It is very much a question of struggle and war, and success depends on ceaseless vigilance.

We can now return to our main subject and see that *non-resistance to evil is the reverse of a spiritual education. It is spiritual neutralization*. Non-resistance and its ideology of tolerance combine to form an amoral acid that slowly dissolves all of our carefully constructed moral fortifications.

It also needs to be pointed out that the structure of the conscience is, at least in part, a social phenomenon. Since the moral life must be *cultivated*, and since this cultivation is guided by external influences in addition to private discernment and intention, we cannot deny that it has a *collective* aspect. *My inner life is not entirely my own*. Although I inhabit it first and foremost and it is primarily my responsibility, although I live in it and it is my own private chamber, much of what I find there and assume to be my own creation was originally *given* from without.

The community, by way of parents, teachers, and priests, helps its members understand the nature of this inner domain. They teach us to keep it sanitary and provide techniques on how to arrange its defenses. This means that the task of spiritual education as a social institution is susceptible to sophistication, on the one hand, and degeneration, on the other. The technique of spiritual education possessed by societies is the inheritance of thousands of years of discernment. We find that the collective aspect of the conscience (which, again, is not its only aspect) has been *established* for centuries, and each new member is given access to this wellspring of moral knowledge and benefits from it. This is one of the benefits of membership in a community. This is why the ancient wisdom could never be individualistic, and always taught that man was only able to develop his full potential within the context of society.

What is most important to our point here is that this work of spiritual education is never complete and that this ‘art’ does not maintain itself. We can liken it to a garden that the community must cultivate for the sake of its individual members.

On both the collective/public and the individual/private levels, the conscience cannot simply be left alone as if its ability to perceive truth were self-sustaining. And yet this is what has been done. In the name of non-resistance, liberalism, and progressive tolerance, all moral guides are silenced. The maintenance of the inner chamber, the whole *art of spiritual defense*, is abandoned and eventually undermined.

### *Shame as betrayal.*

The result of this neglect of our collective spiritual education, after so many infidelities to the truth we were meant to preserve, is the pain of *shame*. Shame is the penalty we receive when we leave open the city gates so that the enemy can come and go freely, pillaging and plundering at will. Shame comes from the betrayal of whatever nobility had been built up in Western civilization over the centuries.

Much of what is said or done today in art and literature could be interpreted as an expression of this shame or as a response to it. We go to great lengths to reassure ourselves. Observe with care the attitude toward shame displayed by social movements in late-stage modern civilization.

Since we do not understand the cause of this shame, since we are no longer even aware of the betrayals we commit, we feel the shame, but we perceive it as an injustice. After all, it is unjust to be humiliated for a crime you do not even understand. We reject our shame as we would deny a slanderous accusation brought against us. We become indignant, unaware of the nature of our guilt, but feeling it all the same. It is common to hear people talk of shame as if it were a thing to be rejected altogether, and we are encouraged to suppress it as if its presence were a sign of bad hygiene, preventing us from 'being proud of who we are' and from 'doing what we have a right to do'.

The ideal state, we are told, is one of *shamelessness*, where the only vices are scruples. In terms of the spiritual life, this amounts to the willful demolition of one's inner defenses so that any and all influences gain access to the holy center, good and evil alike, without discrimination. To argue for anything less than this surrender is called *bigotry, prejudice* or *hate*. This is perhaps the final stage of the decomposition of the conscience, of progressive barbarism.

***Non-resistance to evil is not strength.***

Doctrinaire pacifists would have us believe that non-resistance is the way of sacrifice, the path of noble suffering. When Christians argue in favor of non-resistance, they make a great show of the early martyrs. Without doubt, the early martyrs are a phenomenal example of a commitment to righteousness, and this type of *exceptional* non-resistance can *under certain conditions* manifest itself as the highest witness of a spiritual commitment. We grant this, but we argue that this form of witness is an exception and should never be presented as normative. That is to say, this submissive style of non-resistance to evil, outside of the exceptional circumstances of martyrdom, is actually *the easy way out*. In fact, non-resistance as a day-to-day practice demands virtually nothing whatsoever of its disciples.

Again, we do not deny that in some rare cases the 'turning of the cheek' can signify the path of strength and discipline, as has been demonstrated in recent history by the Civil Rights Movement and elsewhere. But as a norm, and in most situations, it is far easier to ignore evil than to show resistance to it. Between non-resistance and deliberate, open resistance, it is far more often the latter option that demands sacrificial courage and various modes of selfless suffering, while the former presents an excuse for cowardice.

Especially if taken as a general principle of morality, non-resistance does not so much challenge us to overcome our impulses as it condones the natural tendency toward spinelessness. It congratulates us for doing nothing but minding our own business when evil manifests itself in our presence.

It would indeed take a great deal of self-discipline to face the lions in the coliseum for the sake of non-resistance; but again, an honest appraisal of general human experience will tell us that non-resistance typically involves endless small acts of indifference, and indifference is the absence of moral character.

Far from being a 'moral discipline', it is apparent that non-resistance comes easily—even naturally—to men possessing the *weakest* characters—and for the most part this weakness need not be encouraged at all. It is simply *the absence of willful action*, to which most of us are inclined already. Do we really need to point out that the proponents of non-resistance are painting a picture of *courage* that, in the end, takes the coward as the model? And if this

is true, does it really need to be demonstrated that this will not so much build character as neutralize it?

### *Where is evil situated?*

Religious people complain that tolerance liberates the libertine but restrains everyone else. In response, the modernists say that religious people are not really being restrained at all, and that they are permitted to struggle against evil all they want, but that this struggle is merely being limited to the private domain of their own inner lives. They cannot 'foist their beliefs on others'. In other words, as Christians we are not being stifled in the least, only forced to keep our spiritual work to ourselves so as not to interfere with anyone else's liberty. This is much like how secularism 'tolerates' religion by saying that religious expression is acceptable only insofar as it does not have a say in public policy. You may pursue spiritual development via religious means, but you may not do this in or through public spaces, or by public funding, and certainly not via the letter of the law.

This attitude betrays certain assumptions about man and about evil that need to be investigated and verified. Where is moral evil truly situated? How is it communicated? And if it needs to be confronted at all, is it possible to deal with it in a *merely* private manner? In other words, if we only pursue morality and religion privately, are we still pursuing them at all? Are these things of a nature that can be confined in such a way? And on the other hand, if there is such a thing as evil, is it of a nature that it can be confronted privately and not publicly?

We should remind the reader that although our central question pertains to moral evil, there is not always a clean division between the moral, the metaphysical, and the physical, and the universality of evil in its supra-moral aspect is what determines our understanding of evil at the moral level.

At the risk of becoming repetitive, we are seeking to understand evil as a matter of human experience and in the context of human relationships, which on the broadest level means understanding evil as a practical, personal, and interpersonal problem. This means our emphasis is mostly, but not exclusively, on what Catholicism calls *moral evil*. With that in mind, let us proceed.

***Moral evil is always personal.***

At the level of moral experience, we can say that evil is situated in the hearts and minds of human actors, and not in any non-human thing. The Bubonic Plague was an expression of *physical evil* insofar as it destroyed many lives, but the plague itself cannot be called *morally evil*. Likewise, a false ideology, which amounts to a lie, is said to be evil in the sense that it represents a departure from the truth, but the lie itself cannot possess a *moral* quality. The *moral evil* that is associated with the lie is situated in the liar himself, and not in his deceptive speech, which merely conveys the evil and gives it external, verbal form. The distinction seems trivial, but trivial mistakes in judgement have significant consequences in action, discernment, worldview, and public policy.

It does not matter whether we are considering the suffering that results from disease or famine or the pain of torture or the grief of the survivors of a terrorist attack. In every case, it is inappropriate to try and situate *moral evil* within the *material order*, which would amount to a confusion of two separate categories of evil. Nature as such is always morally neutral. The weather cannot be *morally* good or evil. Even our own bodies, when they seem to betray us through disease and pain, cannot be good or evil in the moral sense.

To be clear, this does not mean that all moral discernment is *subjective*; it only means that all external phenomena are morally neutral until their consequences cross the threshold of human consciousness and produce certain effects in the heart of man, and only at this point can we accurately speak of good or evil.

We can see the truth of this in the starkly different ways people deal with earthly suffering: one person might interpret his disease as a cosmic injustice and become spiteful and bitter; another person might transmute his suffering into an opportunity for spiritual purification. In one case we can speak of evil, in the other we can speak of goodness and the nurturing of virtue, and both in relation to the same material phenomenon.

Even in systems that emphasize *objectivity*, every moral question cannot fail to take into account the orientation of the will. Taking Catholicism as an example, it is said that there are certain acts that are *intrinsically evil*, which is to say, evil without our having to analyze the intent knowledge of the human actor. Abortion is one example of an intrinsic evil, since it is evil always and everywhere.

But what is really being expressed by this manner of speaking? It seems that the concept of intrinsic evil acts as a bridge-concept between physical evil and moral evil and this keeps Catholic morality from spiraling into either subjectivism or a cold, mathematical morality. It essentially makes the point that a human action that realizes a definite evil of the physical order (for example, the taking of an innocent life through abortion) is evil and that this act remains evil regardless of the condition of the will of the individual.

This concept allows Catholic morality to continue to situate moral evil in the human heart while at the same time acknowledging that this situation does not nullify the whole concept of physical evil, and that when human action brings about death and destroys human flourishing, that this is always evil, even while the Church goes on to say that, if the individual did not understand what they were doing or were perhaps being coerced to an extreme degree, then they might not be completely *culpable* (deserving of blame) for this evil in the moral sense. The gravity of evil in its *physical* aspect is admitted into the *moral* system, saving it from one-sidedness.

Thus, what we have said about moral evil being situated in the human heart and not in the natural world remains in effect, because the *culpability* of the individual is dependent on their knowledge and willful participation in the evil they made manifest. We could say that moral evil occurs when the will (subjective) cooperates with some physical evil (objective). Thus, abortion presents itself as an aspect of physical evil because it destroys the life of the unborn, but its subjective-moral dimension is determined (in part) by whether or not the will of the physician was cooperating with or consenting to the realization of an objective evil.

This complexity also allows us to see why it is short-sighted to assume that certain physical actions are evil in and of themselves. Using the case of the physician, it would of course be absurd to situate the evil of abortion in the mere sequence of physical motions executed by the surgeon, such as the wielding of the surgical instruments or the dissection of flesh, which would be nonsense, since these actions are also part of many beneficial medical procedures.

Additionally, the concept of intrinsic evil permits us to speak of moral evil without direct reference to specific events or actors. It allows us to generalize about things that are not immediately

susceptible to generalization. For example, we can say that murder is *intrinsically* evil, but we must always remember that this is an *abstracted* manner of speaking, valid in itself, but in actual reality, there is no such thing as a generic 'murder', there are only *specific murders* involving *specific people*. There is no such thing as murder that is not first and foremost the work of a murderer, even though we speak of 'murder' as if that depersonalized concept were an existent thing possessed of moral qualities. So it is with all intrinsic evils.

We therefore find that even objectively evil actions bring about personal blame only because of the inner states that may or may not be involved. It must be so, since it cannot be imagined that a *good will* could accomplish murder and then be judged guilty of moral wrongdoing after the fact as a kind of punishment based on an external classification, or according to some kind of imposed standard. For one to be guilty of murder, the *will* must be severed from alignment with the *good*, and the accomplishment of the evil act becomes an objective witness of this divorce.

Ivan Ilyin wrote that 'evil begins where the person begins.'[1] We can appreciate his point, but we must add that he failed to make the proper distinctions between moral and physical evil and tended to oversimplify things by ignoring the latter. Again, we know that natural disasters build up virtue in some people while turning other people into veritable monsters. Thus, it is not the natural disaster but its consequences in the human psyche that become morally good or evil.

We conclude by saying that moral evil cannot take up residence in this or that external thing, it can only be realized as a certain psychospiritual deviation from truth. The devil does not generally inhabit guns, knives, bacteria, or the weather. He manipulates the hearts of men.

### *The body as participation in the material order.*

We have spoken several times of material phenomena, and this applies also to the human body, which is itself part of the material order. To strike another person and cause them pain might be the result of a good or an evil will, and could therefore be deemed morally good or morally evil. The mere fact of causing pain is not

[1] Ivan Ilyin, *On Resistance to Evil by Force*, p. 13.

enough to make the judgement. Our body language also is neither good nor evil but flows directly from the interior chamber where good and evil vie for supremacy, and also in the interplay between two persons and their influence on one another.

There are so many acts, expressions, and gestures the moral character of which might change drastically depending on the inner life of the person. Who could argue that a smile is *always* good and loving and not sometimes the façade of hypocrisy? How often is a seemingly kind word actually a manipulation, a flattery, or a seduction? To feed the hungry might be an act of love but it might also hide ulterior motives. We can mention here the Gospel story of the widow who gave a pittance and was judged morally superior to those who gave much more.

Good works *support* spiritual growth but cannot ensure it. Those who say that good works have no value are correct only in the very narrow sense that good works cannot *guarantee* that the will is in fact conformed to the good.

To summarize, we could say that material phenomena take on a strictly moral significance only insofar as they are *signs* and *consequences* of internal states. Actions and moral codes of action indicate and support an inner conformity with the good.

### *We all participate in evil.*

We have said that we will need to touch on all categories of evil, and here we must speak to the reality of *metaphysical evil* and its consequences.

We all participate in metaphysical evil, simply as a fact of our being *creatures*. Any limitation whatsoever is an imperfection in the metaphysical sense. Christ was speaking as a metaphysician, and not a moralist, when he exclaimed: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone."[2]

The Fall is a thing far too complex to address here, but we can say that it involved (but was not limited to) the introduction of the moral dimension into the human experience, hence the 'knowledge of good and evil'. From this moral point of departure, physical evil ensued (aka: death, hunger, daily toil), but the Fall could not have involved the introduction of metaphysical imperfection, since imperfection

[2] Mark 10:18.

in this sense is present even at the earliest stage of creation, as soon as the distinction between *Creator* and *creature* comes into being. The Creator possesses *Absolute* perfection, while the creature is always, by virtue of status, metaphysically imperfect. The creature is, however, capable of a *relative* perfection, hence the 'perfection' of the saints, which could not possibly be identical to the perfection of God.

Again, any absence of perfection implies the presence of imperfection, which is to say, of some type of *evil*, since evil is precisely this *privation of the good*. This privation, however, is bound up with *metaphysical evil* and is not the same thing as *moral culpability*. As we've said already, the individual is not considered *culpable* for every imperfect act, although we must admit that this imperfection manifests evil in some way and that we are always *involved*.

Short of a total realization of the good, we find evil. One need not be committing genocide to be guilty of evil. Every inconsiderate remark, every hasty or unjust generalization, is an evil.

This will sound pessimistic to some, since it paints a picture of man that is far from *humanistic* and implies that everyone is responsible for evil in some sense. But again, we did not say that every person is fully *culpable* for every imperfection, and this is the key.

Part of the problem is that evil tends to be conflated with guilt and sin, and although these things overlap, this equivocation is not precisely accurate. To say that people are susceptible to evil and that evil colors all our actions, or even that evil is present in our hearts and motivations at all times, is not to say that we are all condemned for it. It only means that we are not perfect. The more aware we are of this fact, the better off we will be, since this awareness is what makes *spiritual education* possible.

Contemporary sentimentality cannot bear to admit that we are less than what we ought to be, and that moral improvement is universally mandatory. This is what happens when imperfection is considered equivalent to sin and blame: either imperfection is denied or the blame for it is denied. In order to have a balanced concept of justice, both must be admitted. This is why there can be no *humane* concept of justice without an adequate doctrine of the Fall.

The religions are realistic because they accept man's *fallen* nature. They can afford to be 'pessimistic' in this sense because they also possess the means of salvation from this unfortunate state. Secular humanists cannot accept man's fallen nature because, in the absence of any theory of salvation, if they were to accept the doctrine of the fall, man would simply be doomed.

What we wish to emphasize for now is that even our more mundane activities are tainted with imperfection, and it is only a question of degree. Evil is omnipresent, and to ignore this is dangerously naïve, even if it is more pleasant.

# COMPULSION AND CONSENT

♦♦♦

***The concept of inducement.***

We have made some general observations about good and evil, but we still lack an adequate means of formulating our answer to the problem of *resistance to evil* in its social aspect, especially when we come to the problem of *resistance through the use of force*.

Again, we insist that distinctions are essential. We must make it clear what we are talking about, and this is more difficult than most people assume, who do not seem to notice how often, on the most important subjects, two people argue with one another without ever realizing that they are talking about two different things. Many questions only seem to be unanswerable because they are improperly posed or, on the other hand, because the vocabulary used to pose the question is confused or insufficient.

The question of resistance to evil is a perfect example of this problem, especially when it comes to the use of the term 'violence'. The proponents of non-resistance and pacifism tend to group all forms of *resistance by force* under the heading 'violence'. As will become clear, this is inaccurate, and it confuses the issue so much that it becomes hopelessly insoluble (and we cannot help but think that in some cases this is intentional).

The next step in our discussion, then, is to identify terminological confusions as they appear within existing formulations, and then to introduce the necessary distinctions that have thus far been ignored, and finally to propose an adequate vocabulary that will enable us to speak coherently about this subject.

First, as to the term 'violence', which is laden with sentimental and moral implications. Even to speak it out loud is to experience some level of revulsion. This is because violence, even without precise definition, is rightly understood as an expression of evil. How unfortunate for us, then, if every single act of resistance to evil is an act of *violence*! Happily, this is not the case, but to demonstrate the point, we will need to introduce a series of more precise terms and distinguish between them.

These terms are: *inducement*, *compulsion*, and *coercion*.

None of the above are *synonymous with violence*, and on the contrary, each of them signifies a form of resistance that stands apart from violence and abuse.

We can start at the most general level with the concept of *inducement*.

Imagine that an acquaintance of mine is formulating an argument and I believe that he is wrong, and so I propose my own argument against his. If he accepts my argument and changes his mind, then I have influenced him to discard his old opinion and to adopt mine in its place. If we grant, theoretically, that I was in the right and that I was not leading my friend astray, then we can say that I have *induced him*, and that through this inducement, I caused him to abandon an error, which is to say, an evil, in favor of the truth, which is to say, the good. To put it plainly, when confronted with evil in the form of *error* and in the person of my friend, I responded by exercising *mental inducement* and in this way *resisted evil* and *promoted the good*.

Not only was this truly *resistance to evil*, but we could even say that I exercised a kind of *force* on my friend. Here we can see immediately that the whole question is more nuanced than is often supposed. Most of the arguments for or against 'non-resistance' seem to run right to extremes and forget that this *resistance to evil* plays itself out again and again at various levels in our daily lives and that we all do it instinctively all the time and could hardly do otherwise.

The example above may seem trivial, but again, even trivial opinions have their reality and their moral outcomes, and besides, what if the opinion had to do with abortion, capital punishment, marriage law, or some other far-from-trivial social issue? And is there not currently a serious debate underway in universities about what can or cannot be mentioned or argued, and in that context, does it not appear that even *mental inducement* is being construed as a kind of *violence*?

To make matters more complicated, it is possible to induce oneself as well as others. For example, if I wish to form in myself a habit of exercise but I find that I am too lazy to stick to a routine, then I might present arguments to myself trying to reinforce the goal that I am pursuing. I might rehearse slogans, etc., and a common way of speaking about this is to say that I am trying to 'motivate' myself.

This is self-inducement, and this technique is constantly used by everyone as a way of resisting internal evil.

If we frame the issue of force as one of degrees beginning with the most general and least invasive and escalating to the most extreme, then inducement is the first stage in this progression. It is the first degree of social or interpersonal force exercised by one against another, or against oneself. What is essential here is that we understand that inducement *is nonetheless an example of resistant force*, even if it is a very non-invasive form of it.

To elaborate somewhat, we can say that when I attempt to *induce* someone, I bring to bear the force of my will (through verbal formulations) in such a way that they feel it and unless they are sociopaths or narcissists, cannot avoid feeling it. If I prevail, then what I am given in return is their *consent*, and, presumably, they desist from whatever evil was in question. My attempt at *inducement* was successful.

In a general way, all forms of education are examples of inducement, and this holds true even if the inducement is voluntary, undergone with intention, or by request and as a matter of contract, such as when a student enrolls at a college. Here the student implicitly requests to have the evil of personal ignorance (which is responsible for so many errors) removed via inducement through the process of teaching and guided study. Although we do not use this terminology with regard to university education, it is obvious that this is what it is, and anyone who does not grasp this will miss the point of academics altogether. We can understand when someone objects to being induced to error in the university, but what seems to be in question today is the idea that students would be induced to anything at all, and that is a different issue altogether.

Returning to the nature of inducement, it can be accomplished with or without the consent of the person who is being induced. All arguments or conversations that end with one party being 'convinced' and altering their course of action are examples of inducement and rarely is conscious consent given at the outset. Consent regarding this type of general social inducement is, in a way, implicit in membership in any community.

All inducement involves the imposition of a will on a free agent with the intention of influencing the thought or conduct of the latter. This 'will' might be mine or someone else's, and so it is either *self-*

*inducement* or the *inducement of others*. It could be objected that to induce oneself does not involve an *imposition*, but this is due to an oversimplistic anthropology that denies the manifold nature of the inner life, and the fact that our internal voices are always coming into conflict, vying for control, each claiming to represent the true self, each more or less bearing false witness to the same.

The will is not identical with the rational faculty, nor is it identical with the body and its carnal appetites. Due to this separation between the will and the rational faculty, I can *impose* my will on my reason to direct my thoughts and, as a result, my actions, and in fact I must do this ceaselessly. The example of self-inducement to bodily exercise would involve physical self-inducement, while the internal effort to maintain one's patience with a difficult child is a form of mental self-inducement wherein we try to maintain control over the negative and dangerous emotional states.

Having clarified what is meant by inducement, we can see that here at this first stage we are dealing with a definite example of the use of *force*, with or without the prior consent of the subject, and that this is an example of *forceful resistance to evil* that no one in their right mind would categorize as *violence* since it is a natural and necessary component of the human condition.

### *Parenting and inducement.*

We have just said that no one would consider the day-to-day activity of *inducement* of either ourselves or others to be a form of violence, yet this was not precisely accurate. There are some today who actually do say this, but with respect to a very specific relation: that of parent and child. It is the opinion of some atheists that the teaching of religion (and its moral codes) to a child is a form of mental abuse, which is to say, of *violence*. We will deal with this objection eventually, but we thought it good to mention here at the outset in case the reader was beginning to wonder if we were not stating the obvious, because it turns out that what we have said is not obvious at all to more and more people.

### *Coercion and compulsion as types of inducement.*

Beyond inducement, which is general, we will speak of *coercion* and *compulsion* which are *modes of inducement,* and we will make use of these terms throughout our discussion.

*Coercion* involves the application of pressure (through discourse or other social means) to induce the subject to an action or else suppress an undesirable action, but coercion stops short of enlisting the use of physical force. Instead, coercion tends to increase the cost of the alternatives in such a way that the desired outcome is more certain. Coercion works by psychological and emotional pressures and manipulations.

*Compulsion* is typically more invasive and immediate, and obtains the desired result via force, removing all possible alternatives. This can be accomplished through legal prohibition or physical confrontation and has an interior or psychological application as well, which we will explain below.

To illustrate the difference between these two modes of inducement, we can point to the means used by governments to recruit soldiers for war. They might use either coercion or compulsion. When they encourage preachers to preach in favor of enlistment, when they fan the flames of patriotism, and when public sentiments are such that non-participation is equivalent to cowardice, then we are dealing with various forms of *coercion*. However, should this coercion fail, they might resort to the institution of conscription (which we call 'the draft'). Conscription is *compulsory military service* and it ignores the question of consent entirely. It seeks to *compel* men to serve, under pain of serious legal consequences.

The distinction can also be seen with regard to participation in the educational system. There are means of coercion, such as literacy propaganda, and this encourages attendance by presenting non-participation as irresponsible and detrimental to one's ability to function in society; but at the present time, at least in the United States, participation is not merely *coerced* but is *compulsory*. Anyone who does not comply is subject to legal consequences.

It is clear that we can utilize both forms of inducement against others and also against ourselves, but there are limits involved.

As for *compulsion of the self*, we can say that occasionally we must go beyond encouragement and mental 'urging' and enter the realm of *self-discipline*. In this case, the force of will is our own, and assuming that it is strong and properly developed, this will asserts sufficient control to ensure that the evil is stopped. This could mean forcing oneself to do something or to refrain from doing something.

The decision to undergo a painful dental procedure and the discipline required to endure it are examples of self-compulsion.

An important distinction, when it comes to compulsion and coercion, is that we can speak of *physical* compulsion of the self and of others, and we can speak of *mental* coercion and compulsion of the self, but we cannot speak of the *mental compulsion of others*.

We can attempt to *coerce* another person emotionally or psychologically, and we can enlist *physical compulsion* as a way of achieving this. For example, in order to extract information from an enemy spy, we might throw them in jail (physical compulsion) and interrogate them (mental coercion) but we cannot truly *compel* them to tell us what we want to know. Even if we resorted to the most outrageous forms of torture, we are, in the end, only increasing the cost of their refusal.

This is significant because it informs the way we think about law and force on the social level. If you live under the illusion that mental compulsion of others is actually possible, you might try to make laws to either forbid or achieve this, and the laws would be either abusive or moot.

To clarify further, we can say again that *mental self-compulsion* is possible and occurs whenever we 'force ourselves' to confront some unpleasant idea and to 'deal with it', or, on the other hand, control ourselves so as not to entertain some toxic or perverse idea. We 'overcome' ourselves in these instances, even if the result is merely a *suppression*. Again, this goes beyond the tentative 'urging' of what we have called *self-coercion*. With self-compulsion the will actually asserts control over rebellious passions, reaching even to the mind, in order to achieve its end.

We can now see why *mental coercion* of others is indeed possible, and every appeal to the conscience of another person is a healthy attempt at coercion, but true *mental compulsion* is not. We can argue, we can preach, we can parent, and we can even *threaten* an individual with painful physical consequences, but this is all *coercion* and as such these measures do not close off the alternative. The subject can still decline, although at some cost.

We can influence by various means, but we cannot *take possession* of the mind of another. We can make laws to reward and punish and dole out prison sentences, but, in the end, throwing someone in

prison merely amounts to *physical compulsion* in the service of *mental coercion*. No real mental compulsion occurs. We can even torture and brainwash, at which point we have embarked on a project of violence properly so-called, but this abusive physical compulsion never amounts to true *mental compulsion*.

Here we can point to the political rhetoric about 'freedom of thought' and ask if this makes any sense. What, precisely, was the alternative arrangement? Is there any other option? Was there ever? Freedom of thought has always and everywhere been the fact, since it could not be otherwise. The only thing that we can restrict, and that has historically been restricted, is the freedom to express specific thoughts publicly or in such a way that they might influence the public. If there is a good reason to preach about 'freedom of thought' it is merely to dissuade fools who believe that they have the power of mental compulsion of others. The only thing we can outlaw is the external action that may or may not be motivated by a particular idea. We cannot control what ideas a person has.

To head off some misunderstandings by way of illustration:

If we wish to coerce someone, and so we take one of his children hostage and make threats against the child in order to get the person to do what we want, this certainly targets the emotions of the subject, but on the basis of these manipulations we can only make him *do* certain things or even *profess* certain beliefs, but merely forcing someone to say a thing does not touch their reason or will and so it does not go beyond *physical compulsion*. Throughout all of this, then, the inner life remains invisible and inaccessible and whatever the subject might do or say, they are free to think something else entirely.

This is why *forced conversions* are impossible. If, in the above situation, I demanded a religious profession of faith, the futility of my efforts might not ever become clear to me, but they would be futile nonetheless. By trying to force a person to sincerely 'change his mind', in other words, by attempting the mental compulsion of another person, I am only setting up two possibilities, neither of them actually involving success: either I force an act of hypocrisy, in which case the subject lies, or else the subject will maintain honesty and refuse to profess (which is not so much a refusal as a statement of the impossibility of my demand) and suffer the consequences.

To summarize our remarks, we have available the following types of inducement: mental self-coercion and mental coercion of others; physical self-compulsion and physical compulsion of others; lastly, we have mental self-compulsion. *There is no mental compulsion of others.*

### *When does inducement become violence?*

Having clarified the various forms of inducement we must acknowledge that each of these forms *may or may not constitute a type of violence*.

They represent, as we have already said, so many ways in which the human will is imposed on a being, whether one's own being or that of another, and as such they are susceptible to abuse. Insofar as this imposition is *abusive*, it is reasonable to call it *violence*.

Thus, violence is the abusive imposition of the will on a being. This holds true for inducement of oneself, since examples of self-abuse are easy to come by. A person who uses his willpower to cut himself with a sharp knife might do so as a matter of self-compulsion for the sake of medical necessity, and might also, under the same self-compulsion, do so as a means of suicide. In one case we are dealing with self-preservation and in another we are dealing with self-abuse, which is to say, violence.

### *The dual criteria of love and spiritual insight.*

Since it is clear that people will disagree about when and how inducement actually *crosses the line* between the reasonable and necessary and the abusive and violent, we should identify what standard we can use ourselves in this discussion.

We can say generally that inducement guided by *love* is valid, and that inducement that acts *against love*, which is to say, inducement motivated by indifference or hate, is likely to be abusive. Yet this is not nearly specific enough, since it is not clear what we mean by love. Further clarification is in order.

Love means first and foremost *a genuine concern for the well-being of the beloved.*

The beloved could be another person, or it might be oneself. We are, in fact, required to love ourselves, and self-love is almost a precondition for knowing how to love others properly. When it is a

question of self-inducement, it should be within the context of a healthy love for ourselves, such that it is for *our own good* to action or inaction. When it comes to the inducement of others, it should be for *their* good, and not according to our own pleasure or arbitrary ends.

Yet we have still not been specific enough, since, if love means to desire the good of the beloved, there is too drastic a variation between one person and another to know with any precision what that *good* would look like. Since our understanding of individual good derives from our understanding of *the Good* as an objective and transcendent truth, then it is clear that disagreement about personal or social goods always boils down to disagreement as to the nature of *Goodness Itself*, since I cannot *will* your good if I do not know what *Goodness* looks like.

We take for granted in this manual that there is a spiritual dimension to man and that man's ultimate good is beyond this life and that temporal goods are subordinate to his *spiritual good*. Thus, in order to love anyone, the lover must first and foremost have a degree of *spiritual sightedness*. In other words, to love, we must know God and know what He looks like, else we cannot know how to love any creature. The lover must acknowledge and be able to see with some degree of clarity who God is, what his attributes are, so that he may truly discern the spiritual end of the beloved. This goes back to what was said above about desiring the Good, since God is Good, and love of God is the basis of all *true love* for his creatures.

Just as earthly delights can come between creature and Creator, so also can temporal and intermediate goods undermine the ultimate good of the human person. What is implied here is that at times our love for another might mean withholding from them a temporal good if this subordinate good undermines the ultimate, spiritual good of the being. This is true not just when weighing the temporal against the absolute, but even when weighing various temporal goods against one another. I might deny myself the pleasure of eating additional servings of delicious food, even though the pleasure of food is itself a good, in order to pursue the superior good of bodily health, so that in turn I may pursue the still superior goods of peace, clarity of mind, and temperance. These are goods properly ordered.

Likewise, anyone with some level of moral discernment regularly forgoes immediate pleasures and inferior goods for the sake of

superior goods that might be more lasting and more edifying. The spiritually attuned person will, for this reason, deny themselves certain temporal goods which interfere with the pursuit of the one good that is *everlasting* and of *ultimate* value, which is union with the Divine.

***The greater the spiritual insight, the greater the prerogative of the lover.***

Here we come upon a guiding principle that must be kept in mind regarding love as a motive for intervening in the lives of others.

The fundamental reason that God is permitted to take the lives of his creatures is that God's spiritual insight exceeds that of any creature by an unfathomable degree; and since it is said that God loves humanity perfectly and has perfect spiritual insight, his prerogative for intervention is absolute. If he takes the life of a creature, no injustice is done, and no abuse has occurred. *His prerogative for action is in proportion to the truth of his love*.

The reason that creatures are generally prohibited from killing one another and, on the social level, strongly cautioned against even minor interventions in each other's lives, is that their spiritual insight is always very dim, and therefore their love is so susceptible to error that their prerogative for intervention must be placed within narrow limits.

This does not mean that no prerogative exists, but that it is important to understand the nature of the prerogative. In comparison to the prerogative of the divine, that of the creature is minimal. The point, however, is not to explain away the prerogative, but to indicate decisively that to love someone and to act on that love, I must have a degree of spiritual sightedness. If this vision is lacking, then my love is 'blind' in the worst possible way, and I am likely to harm the beloved even when I am trying to help them.

We will develop this issue of spiritual insight and love. For now, we must simply make the point that if the imposition of a will on a being is to be justified, it must be a matter of love, love of the spiritual good of the beloved, and this requires that the lover know in what that consists.

### *Violence is always wrong.*

We are now in a position to ask what constitutes *violence*. Violence involves the abusive imposition of the will on a being, either through a self-centered motive that undermines the good of the beloved, or one that directs the induced subject toward an evil end. If violence is understood in this light, we can say that it is always wrong, if at the same time we keep in mind the multitude of other circumstances in which *morally licit* inducement might occur.

To recapitulate what has been said, it is not inducement (whether that means coercion or compulsion) that renders force violent, but the relation to goodness of the inducement, as well as the presence or absence of a context of love. There is good self-inducement (including mental self-inducement and physical self-inducement) and there is permissible inducement of others (up to and including physical compulsion), and all these are distinct from violence, which only occurs when we step outside the sphere of love or act without a real knowledge of what love is, from the point of view of spiritual vision.

### *Secular powers and just war.*

At the risk of getting too far ahead of ourselves, we can anticipate a political problem:

Secular governments, meaning those modern regimes that find religious justifications abhorrent, have virtually nullified their own capacity to wage a just war. That is not to say they have nullified it in practice, since all governments, insofar as they meet a bare minimum of legitimacy, have a right to wage war. "For there is no power but of God, and the powers that be are established by God."[3] Insofar as a state represents a legitimate political authority, it exercises prerogatives as an ordained power, just or unjust. We mean to say only that these states have, from a moral point of view, even if not a purely political one, confused things beyond recovery.

As for rhetoric, these secular powers still offer justifications for the force they deploy, and these justifications might involve appeals to love or to some perceived good (in our day, typically for the sake of 'freedom' or 'democracy'), and they will claim that they are pursuing 'humanitarian' ends, but this only amounts to admitting outright that they have no interest in the spiritual good either of their own

[3] Romans 13:1.

people or of the people they are using force against, and so the criterion of spiritual vision that would validate their use of force up to and including the killing of an enemy is obscured.

In short, we could say that the only just war, broadly speaking, is a holy war, and an atheistic regime, or what in the end is the same, a regime that is silent on the question of religious truth, cannot hardly discern what situations justify the use of force and how and to what degree the use of force is permissible.

We say this as a preview and an anticipation. Further clarifications are needed in order to give full force to such a general claim and we do not intend to develop a theory of war in this section.

### *The line between healthy and abusive inducement.*

Anyone who has set before themselves the task of spiritual self-education knows that mental self-inducement and physical self-compulsion are primary ways of making spiritual or moral progress in this life. The task is to find the line between necessary, healthy self-inducement and perverse inducement that is abusive and therefore violent.

The process of forgiveness, presented by Christianity as an essential component of spiritual development, is an excellent example of how inducement comes into play, because forgiveness despite pain always involves discipline in the form of mental self-compulsion. Prayer itself involves inducement, since to 'pray without ceasing' we must exercise regular discipline.

Self-inducement is not only for lofty spiritual goals. Normal mental hygiene (not letting oneself get carried away by negative emotions, for example) is maintained primarily by correctly applying mental self-inducement.

On the other hand, it is possible to mentally induce oneself *in a harmful way* and become guilty of *self-abuse*. To justify our vices or avoid punishment for a crime, we might compel the mind to invent lies, distorting its true function which is the discernment of truth. We may also use our intelligence to manipulate others to their detriment, and so on, and in these cases our self-compulsion becomes self-abuse.

Physical self-inducement is healthy when it gets us out of bed in the morning and motivates us to carry out our physical labors, to pursue

the right course in matters of health and medicine, and to apply ourselves to virtuous living. But on the other hand, it is possible to coerce oneself into committing all types of illicit acts, and typically the mental self-abuse mentioned above is accompanied by forms of physical self-compulsion. A manipulative liar will 'put on a good face' and act in all kinds of disingenuous ways, enlisting his body as an instrument of deceit. How many of us have, in our lowest moments, had to 'force ourselves' to ignore the voice of conscience and our own disgust in order to carry out an evil act that we clearly recognized? All of the above represent attacks on oneself and are forms of violence.

### *The question of external assistance.*

Given the weight and universality of the task of *spiritual self-education*, it should not be difficult to see that each of us will, sooner or later, need assistance *from the outside*. We are responsible for ourselves first and foremost, but at some point, our blindness or weakness in the face of passions will stop us short, and without aid we will stall and regress.

To say it another way, the powers of the individual are *primary* in this process but never *sufficient*. "It is not good for man to be alone" because he cannot become all that he must be if left entirely to his own devices. He is *fallen*. His will tends toward weakness. This is the concept of *concupiscence*, without which no adequate social teaching, no valid anthropology, can be developed. Without the notion of concupiscence society will tend toward a fantastical overestimation of the powers of the individual.

In view of the *weakness of the individual will*, especially in the early years of childhood development, it is impossible to imagine anyone making great moral progress in complete isolation. *We do not civilize ourselves*, rather we participate in *our own civilization*.

Only a very naïve anthropology, such as that of Rousseau, could teach that *individual effort* can suffice and that it is never necessary to subject a will to pressures of inducement originating in other wills.

Again, we need only refer to the state of childhood to see that external assistance is not simply an exception but is in fact the rule for human moral development, and that the task becomes predominantly 'individual' only very late in the game. We might say

that moral education is only individualistic *after graduation* and therefore after all the groundwork has already been laid and the structure mostly in place. And it never becomes *purely* an individual affair. People continuously educate one another, with or without knowing it, with or without the consent of either the educated or the educator.

Who would deny that a child lacks the fundamental skill of self-restraint? In the interest of individualism, should this child be left to his own devices? This would be the abolition of parenthood.

The same holds true for persons of any age, especially in cases of demonstrated weakness of character, when his or her actions beg for assistance. Who would argue that the drug addict ought not to experience any negative pressures from without, or that a person who cannot keep from stealing should not have to live in fear of punishment, when this punishment is in place for their own benefit (among other reasons), to help them build up the power of self-restraint, which is the only thing that can save them from themselves in the long run?

*The lives of many people cry out for aid*, and the crime of naïve and individualistic moral theories is that in practice they produce heartlessness, condemning each to his own weakness. Who would not reach out and seize the hand of a person in despair who was about to swallow poison or throw themselves in front of traffic? We do not even need to address the risks faced by the intervening person, even though they are real, since the philosophy we oppose does not hate intervention on grounds that it is risky but because it is unjust, suggesting that such persons ought to be left alone to fight their own battles, regardless of how clearly and decisively they have been defeated!

The fact is that most people, in some way, shape, or form, are not up to the task of self-inducement *in the total absence of supportive external inducement*. At that point—when my own powers fail or my blindness intervenes—the only hope for progress in moral development is to subject ourselves to pressures originating in others, both in the extreme and in daily routine, via social norms and legal prohibitions.

### *Reciprocal moral education is inescapable.*

We need to drive home the point that, even if certain philosophical movements try to deny our obligation (both private and public) to aid others who are not up to the task of spiritual self-education, they nonetheless are involved in it because it is a fact of social life. Even the individualists benefit from education of the supra-individual order, just as atheists benefit from the grace of a God they do not believe in.

Every one of us has a hand in educating others, regardless of any ideological attitudes to the contrary. Every smile, every approving or disapproving gesture, every look has its moral impact on persons around us. This impact is especially pronounced between parents and children, but the *encounter* occurs between all persons everywhere. No one is exempt. We are social beings, and we are constantly adapting to our social environment, for good or evil. This pertains to situations where the conversation is consciously directed toward educating someone or changing the subject's mind about a particular thing, but it is not limited to that context and extends even to the way in which we carry ourselves physically, to our posture and facial expressions.

It also works in the negative sense, through the absence of external pressure. For example, the absence of a disapproving mannerism or facial expression *condones* what is done in one's presence and in this way no response is a response. Action and inaction both *teach* people what is acceptable behavior and what is not. In the absence of objections and social-psychological obstructions, those behaviors and tendencies that call for self-restraint are left unchecked and in the extreme they become pathological.

This is why the refusal of a parent to correct their own child's destructive impulse is a kind of *negligence*, and in a similar manner, the refusal of society to censure evil is a *collaboration with it*. There are no sidelines on this field of battle.

### *The difference between childhood and adulthood.*

Something that is bound to come up in this discussion is the distinction between adulthood and childhood.

It is obvious that both coercion and compulsion are necessary for the education of children, but are they still necessary in adulthood? Those who find all compulsion distasteful will inevitably object that

once we reach adulthood, such pressures and interventions are an offense to the dignity of 'free will' and 'self-government' of the mature being possessed of reason.

First, we respond that the distinction between child and adult is qualitatively real but, in daily life, it is never altogether clear. We ignore this by choosing arbitrary timelines. This was helped in traditional societies by detailed rites of passage that reached beyond the *merely legal* and into the psyche of those who were 'crossing over', but today there is nothing of the sort. One day you are a 'minor' and the next you are sent off to war. Thus, we seem to pretend that beings populate different moral worlds based on an arbitrarily chosen date and time. However, if we set aside these confusions and admit that there is a very important distinction between the compulsion of children and of adults, we can say that it is more a question of degree and form than it is a question of presence or absence of external compulsion. There is a progression in things, and while it is not difficult (and in fact it is undeniable) to see that children are not adults, and that adults should not be treated as children, it is less clear exactly when this transition occurs internally and it seems to us that in many people it never does occur, at least not completely.

We are far from arguing that adults have no justification for demanding greater freedom, and we agree completely that a 'paternal' style of government is degrading. Nonetheless, we should not hastily assume that the fundamental means of spiritual education are discarded at some arbitrarily chosen age, for example after eighteen years. It would be more coherent to say that man remains perpetually in need of both internal and external forms of compulsion, but these must be adapted to his state and make allowance for his personal dignity, which in adulthood involves the use of reason, the taking on of serious obligations, and, presumably, a more developed capacity for self-restraint and self-discipline.

Graduation into adulthood does not involve the abolition of all external forms of inducement. Compulsion that was valid in principle for the child does not suddenly become unjust in principle simply due to age. Rather the form of delivery and the origin of the will are changed so that great scope is given to adults and no single individual holds arbitrary sway over their actions.

The goal of childrearing is to educate the child—mentally, morally, emotionally—to the point where they can spiritually educate

themselves. This implies the construction of a *strong will* proficient in all healthy forms of self-inducement. *Only the strong will can remain a free will when the pressures of temptation come calling*. But when a parent succeeds, and the child becomes an adult, the young man does not suddenly become independent of all external educating forces.

As the individual transitions from the *original society* of the family to join the greater society of which the family is a part and begins to participate in its projects and even its administration, parental compulsion transforms into broader social forms of compulsion. Law and custom are—if they are *just*—expressions of Divine Law descending to us via the authorities placed on Earth for just that purpose. That is the objective aspect of social moral education. But we can also conceive of them in another aspect, as 'externalized' means of 'self-compulsion' utilized by a self-conscious collectivity to pursue the good. It is therefore short-sighted to act as if government cannot be an indirect expression of self-government, and to construe all its prohibitions and obligations as abusive and totalitarian, even if it is certainly possible for it to be that as well.

### *Individualism and socialization.*

One of the greatest crimes of modern individualistic societies is that they deny and therefore deprive people of one of the greatest benefits of membership in a community, which is the collective spiritual education that societies are traditionally understood to provide.

Liberal individualism tends to see spiritual and moral education as a matter of private discernment alone. And when it does not deny the social aspect of this education, it presents it as an 'interference' and sometimes as an abuse.

Individualism teaches that man is not fundamentally a social being but is instead a fully autonomous molecule amongst other more or less similar molecules, each possessed of a mutually exclusive 'free will'. It is then the prerogative of this will to pursue whatever it deems worthy. Hence the popular vision of personal development as 'self-creation' where the individual constructs an identity based on his own aspirations and tastes. If this process is derailed or obstructed by the imposition of an external will, it is considered an act of violence because in this paradigm spiritual self-education

should not permit any external intrusion except in cases of prior consent.

This view ignores the fact that everyone who was raised under the protection of other humans (and there is no alternative) has already been carried along for years through the influence of another will or by multiple wills, belonging primarily to his parents, and that our will is always in flux and responding to external pressures. This continues throughout adulthood. For individualism, the intrusion of external influences is perceived as injustice, but a more realistic anthropology would suggest that this intrusion is a natural and necessary situation. The real question should be: how do we build up in communities a set of forces that are conducive to healthy spiritual development and not completely ignorant of it or destructive of it.

What is, for individualism, an offense to 'autonomy' is for us a *gift* that in normal cultures is *the* most significant benefit of living alongside other people. Again, we refer to the Christian principle that *it is not good for man to be alone*.

### *The externalization of the spiritual life.*

If a community is vigorous in its pursuit of moral and spiritual development, these *energies of willful self-discipline* overflow from the individual domain and combine to form complex social institutions. These institutions (customs, laws, literature, art) are the hard-earned products of a collective project in spiritual progress.

Art, to take only one example, is not only a 'product' of the spiritual vitality of a people, but is also a guide and cause of education for new members, such as children. To grow up in the shadow of a Catholic cathedral is to receive a certain inner formation: it imposes a certain spiritual style by mere proximity. The same goes for all the various products of culture. *They are formative*.

All of what we have been discussing involves a degree of mental coercion, and imposes itself on the free will of each member of society. The overall task of these socially organized forms is not to take over from the individual the responsibility of self-inducement, which remains necessary always; rather, they exist to reinforce individual self-education by supporting the shared goal of moral development. Again, this is *the greatest gift* offered to the individual

by society, and only becomes a curse when the society in question is corrupt in such a way that it reinforces vice instead of virtue.

Lastly, we can say that religion, and the moral ambience it provides, is the most powerful formative force for the individual conscience. The principle of 'separation of church and state' which in the modern world amounts to the exile of religious expression to the home and to certain officially designated buildings is a horrible injustice. It does precisely what it was intended to do: it renders the moral and spiritual influence of religion inert.

### ***Physical compulsion and restraint.***

We have just discussed mental coercion in society and observed that not only is it permissible but in fact *there is no real alternative*. Now, we have to deal with situations in which mental coercion through external influence is not enough. This brings us to the question of physical compulsion.

The use of physical force is an extreme. It represents the last and least desirable stage of inducement, but it should be clear that it always takes place in connection with the lesser forms of inducement and presents itself only when other options prove untenable.

It was said above that external things cannot be evil in themselves, and this applies to external means of physical compulsion. To cut a person with a knife is not evil *in itself*, and to universally condemn this action without qualification is absurd. In the context of surgery, for example, the use of the knife might be lifesaving. Although this example is obvious, the same error is manifest in universal condemnations of physical compulsion.

External means are evil insofar as they manifest an evil will and/or are not directed to the good of the person being compelled. To return again to the example of the surgeon, it is easy to see that surgery might be lifesaving when done correctly and for the right reasons, but perverse when carried out with perverse intent and contrary to the good of the patient.

What, then, of general arguments against compulsion and suppression? Should small children be permitted to take drugs and play with weapons? Would an authority (first and foremost the

parents) be right in using physical force to stop them, and if that was not enough, to lock them up long enough for the danger to pass?

If I see a neighbor entering a fit of rage and, knowing that he is weak and prone to be ruled by his passions, would it not be an act of love and friendship to restrain him and, if necessary, to lock him up?

If, out of love and out of a desire to save my friend from moral and physical destruction, I use physical compulsion (or restraint) to impose my will over and against his, how could this be construed as an act of 'violence' or 'abuse'? And yet it seems to us that the proponents of a permissive liberalism would have difficulty explaining how their logic of non-resistance would not at the same time stop so many *morally licit* acts of physical compulsion.

The most important point here is that physical force cannot be categorized as either good or evil without consideration of the moral essence of the act as to whether it was done in accordance with love, and more specifically, love understood not as a transitory emotion but as a concern for the *spiritual good* of the one being compelled.

### *For the sake of free will and not against it.*

Physical compulsion and restraint—for example, locking someone up in prison for a reasonable sentence—is justified insofar as it is conducive to the spiritual education of the individual. Prison *can be justified* in this sense because if properly managed and if situated within a system of authentic *justice*, this kind of restraint not only protects others from the acts of the prisoner, but also gives them space and time to reach a moment of clarity and to be rehabilitated. It removes their liberty because liberty is conditional and may simply permit someone to self-destruct. Prison can provide an opportunity for *moral education*—perhaps long overdue—to take place.

In this case it cannot be said that the free will of the offender is being denied. It is quite the opposite: the fact that someone could commit rape or murder or some other soul-destroying crime demonstrates that they *do not have a will that is truly free* and that their situation cries for help, even if they themselves do not explicitly ask for it. Most people who lack the strength of will to stop themselves from doing horrible things will also lack the strength of will required to *admit defeat* and to *beg for help*. Social restraints that provide space for moral development are also going to result in the strengthening

of a will in the hope that it will, eventually, be able to operate with sufficient 'freedom' to avoid being further enslaved by addiction, passion, and other weaknesses of character once the restraints are removed.

Needless to say, this excludes all forms of compulsion that do not respect the spiritual integrity of the person but instead undermine it or deny it: depraved conditions, torture, withholding food or sleep or contact with loved ones. Ignorance of the possibilities of rehabilitation and the nature of human needs. All of these have no place because they undermine strength of will and are more likely to nourish spite and hatred. Inhuman methods *break the will* of an individual that is already on the brink, at which point things become hopeless.

Lastly, it is necessary at times that inducement should produce suffering, sometimes in the extreme, and this does not imply violence or abuse. When an addict loses access to drugs, the result is not only physically painful, but also mentally excruciating. We point this out to say that when sentimentalists try to argue that any physical compulsion or mental coercion that produces pain is, for that reason, abusive, we can say once again that this is too general a statement to be true.

***This is not a defense for current forms of compulsion.***

It should be obvious from what we've written in other sections of this manual that we do not approve of the values pursued by modern civilization. We are not convinced by all of the rhetoric about rights that is not counterbalanced by an interest in *the rights of God*. Nor can we condone the unqualified pursuit of liberty when it is denied that the only freedom that matters is *freedom from sin*.

We are outlining a theory of resistance to evil that cannot be easily reconciled with the institutions of contemporary society, and so our argument should not be misconstrued as a defense for the justice system as it stands, not to mention any of the other forms of compulsion utilized by the modern state for its ends. If we admit that compulsion on the part of the community is in principle legitimate, this does not mean that we condone 'the draft' which in the current sense amounts to total bodily authority over every citizen for whatever purpose and for an indeterminate period of time. Nor do we condone compulsory participation in an educational system that is propagandistic and atheistic. As for

prison, if we proclaim that it is, in principle, justified, this does not mean that we are supportive of the American prison industry. *Our theory is offered as a way of appraising current ideologies and social systems*, not as a justification for what they happen to be doing, even if there seems to be some superficial agreement.

### *Some apparent difficulties involved in the use of physical force.*

There are still some difficulties involved in the use of force that we must examine, difficulties that would seem to present serious problems with its application. First and foremost, it is obvious that the use of physical force does not seek the consent of the individual but acts against his will. Can this be justified?

We have already said that the criteria for resistance to external evil, especially in the form of *physical intervention* in the lives of others, are primarily *love* and *spiritual knowledge.*

To clarify, we can say that the whole reason for accepting and respecting the 'dignity' of the free will, and for giving those in possession of will some degree of personal liberty, is the fact of our spirituality, which means that, if we have dignity, it is because we are endowed by God with dignity. We respect the liberty of persons on this spiritual basis and without it all talk of human dignity falls short.

Likewise, what gives legitimacy to our external acts is the fact of their origin in such a *spiritualized* free will, since a will that is not *spiritualized* is not free. If a man is spiritually awake and his self-government thereby intact, then even his external errors are not immediately subject to correction by the imposition of an external will, because it is assumed that he will use his own will to correct his own errors. It is obvious that this is the first choice and that we should not impose our will on a person who is fully capable of self-imposing their own within the domain of their person.

What happens when these conditions are not present? What happens if a person has never received adequate spiritual education and is in possession of a malformed conscience and has no ability to conduct themselves according to the good? What happens when a person is so weak-willed that they cannot control their lower self and when corruption bleeds out into relationships with others and threatens their well-being in turn?

### *Man against himself.*

An essential point of spiritual anthropology, especially for our discussion here, is the fact of our being able to turn against ourselves. The battle of the spirit and the flesh so often mentioned in the Bible is just one way of depicting this very real situation. We find that we are rarely an inner unity, and there seems to be a multiplicity of selves within us, all vying for control. When out of spiritual blindness we betray ourselves and permit demons to make their home within the inner chamber of the heart, the dignity of free will becomes a bad joke. The situation is described well by Ivan Ilyin:

> "...if a person affirms his independence with evil deeds, abusing his autonomy and degradingly perverting his spirituality, his personality turns into a deep inner division. On the one hand, his spirituality is potentially not yet extinguished: somewhere, in its unfulfilled depths, it retains the ability to turn the eye to spiritual perfection and embark on the path of self-restraint and self-government...But, on the other hand, it turns out that the forces of his soul are actually absorbed in anti-spiritual content and aspirations which turn against love, his spiritual eye is closed or blinded, his passions and deeds breathe enmity and division. He does not exercise spirituality, but anti-spirituality, and the inherent power of his love becomes perverted and pernicious. Clarity does not rule him through will, love does not satisfy him; he lives and acts not as a spiritually free lord of his soul and his behavior, but as a helpless slave of his evil impulses and mental mechanisms. He becomes not that which he could potentially be, and cannot become what he is in the hidden meaning of his emptiness. His personality consists of a deceased spirit and an intensely charged anti-spirituality born from a dying love, a cold indifferent cynicism, and searing anger."[4]

*Opposing the free exercise of another man's will is unacceptable only insofar as we offend the spiritual truth it manifests. Ultimately there is no right but that of truth, and if there are any other rights, they derive from their participation in truth, and they become invalid once they turn against it.*

Does this mean that there should be no laws protecting rights? Of course not, since the abuse of a prerogative does not mean that the exercise of the prerogative is itself an evil. What it does mean is that

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[4] *On Resistance to Evil by Force*, p. 44.

our view of rights as 'absolute and inviolable' lacks both humility and realism and is in need of modification, otherwise the whole conversation is a dead end.

When we use resistant force against the villain, we are not combating spirituality, but anti-spirituality. We are resisting evil, and the enemy is not so much the imprisoned soul as it is the malevolent force which has bound him. We restrain *this man* for the sake of the *spiritual man* who is entombed within.

The will of the villain is not a free will properly so-called. The will in such a being is latent, which is to say not *in force*. Due to negligence or weakness or error, it has lost its power of self-discipline. The will of this man is *involved* in the manifestation of his actions but blindly, without the ability to effectively exercise moral discernment. He is a puppet monarch who still seems to sit on the throne, and might even fancy himself in control, but he has become possessed through the manipulations of passion, or worse.

### *We cannot wait for consent.*

There is a point at which the soul becomes submerged in evil passions so much that to manifest a good will would require an act of heroism bordering on the miraculous, and it is never prudent to delay a good deed in expectation of a miraculous intervention.

Actions that would be simple for a healthy and morally 'free' individual—a man of good character and a strong will—become almost impossible. We all know individuals for whom even the most commonplace acts of self-discipline are immensely challenging. They are at the mercy of their impulses.

To insist that we must wait for consent, or for an explicit request from the individual before coming to the aid of his drowning soul, is inhumane, and the disciples of this kind of 'autonomy' are the same who, through the ages, have always asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

### *False equivalence between attacker and defender.*

We descend the ladder of means so that we can climb back up. The first goal of physical resistance is to make room for the healthy mental inducement that at some point became untenable. The target of influence is the soul, and we seek to come to its aid by weakening the negative influences that assail it, up to and including the physical

removal of the person from a harmful environment, and then, assuming the possibility is open to us, by strengthening the will through the provision of spiritual education in the form of healthy relationships, opportunities for therapy, etc.

When the situation becomes so dire that room for moral salvation can only be created through the use of physical force, then *physical force becomes not merely permissible but obligatory*.

When confronted with a group of men who are raping someone, should we stop short at mental coercion, offering a sermon and appeals to the conscience to try and awaken their convictions in the hope that they will cease and desist? Of course not, and to do this would be an act of either cowardice or extreme naivety. It would amount to the refusal of an obligation to intervene via physical force.

Sometimes we are told that by using physical force against the villain who is likewise using physical force, we are 'lowering ourselves to his level' and adopting an evil means to fight evil. This was the position of Leo Tolstoy, to cite one example. But this shows a total ignorance of the criterion of spiritual goodness.

What the rapist says to the victim is essentially this: *You are a means to the satisfaction of my perverse passions, my lust, and I deny your autonomy and your own spiritual good, and I subordinate your being to myself and reduce you to an object to be used at my pleasure.*

It is easy to see here a total absence of love. These actions are contrary to spiritual truth. Such a situation degrades both the attacker and the victim. It inflicts violence on both.

Contrast this with the intent of the intervening will, the one who steps in as 'defender', saying: *You despise your spiritual good and the good of your neighbor. You find yourself at the edge of a precipice at the bottom of which is your destruction. For your sake and for hers, I will stop you.*

There is a difference between the attacker who ignores the good and the defender who acts to preserve as much good as possible. To make out both persons to be perpetrators of 'violence' is to disregard entirely the criteria we set forth earlier, which make the essence of the moral act a question of *spiritual clarity* and *benevolent love*. The attacker is manifesting externally his own blindness and hate and is

possessed by evil; the defender is manifesting his love, guided by his perception of truth, and he is acting in the service of truth. The defender is ultimately acting in defense of both attacker and victim, and in a real sense, in defense of society at large.

### *Free speech as mental coercion.*

The whole concept of free speech is misunderstood today. Engulfed by 'the logic of rights', free speech has become a slogan pulled out of thin air, without connection to any principles capable of justifying it.

Free speech, rightly understood is a lesser form of combat intended to preserve peace, which is to say, a form of invasive coercion that cannot be otherwise. It is combat with purpose, with social utility, and its value is *social.* In other words it is a contingent liberty designed to have a *social* benefit. But in the modern context it is reinterpreted individualistically, so that it becomes a special prerogative of individuals which they claim for themselves alone without regard to any social good. Free speech is 'my right' and is defended not because it is better for everyone in the long run but because it is something I am allowed to do and no one can stop me.

By locating its source and justification in the individual, which is to say, in subjectivity, free speech turns against its original reason for being. It is no longer a liberty *in the service of society*, but instead a form of license, wielded over and against society. Combative or disagreeable speech is no longer justified because it is a way of helping society discern the good, for the sake of mutual spiritual education, but is instead seen as one of so many other rights that need no justification whatsoever and that can therefore be exercised indiscriminately for or against the good of the community as a whole.

If free speech is valid, it can only be as a way of allowing people to come into conflict without having to resort to physical force. Free speech is a publicly sanctioned form of mental coercion of others via argument and the expression of moral sentiments. It has always been assumed that it would manifest aggression, but it is a controlled aggression, a civilized form of combat, and this is why it is acceptable.

The bizarre view of free speech that we see today is completely different. Since in liberal regimes there is no concept of the common

good and no obligation to pursue it, free speech becomes an instrument for the suppression of the good.

If individuals are protected when they condemn a certain government action or policy, this is not because dissent is a good that we wish to protect, but because we know that the prolonged suppression of dissent will eventually produce revolt, and that it is better for our leaders to hear criticism than to be dragged out of their offices and hung.

Critical speech against an idea or activity or institution is necessarily unpleasant or hurtful to the persons involved in the criticism, but this is acceptable because, if it could not happen, and if there were no hope of 'fighting it out' verbally before having to resort to more extreme and invasive measures. There would be bloodshed because the non-violent means were unavailable. Restricting verbal conflict undermines peace because it removes an important stopgap between peace and war.

Today all public criticism with a moral or religious tone is reframed as hate speech. This is the natural outcome of generations of training to the effect that you, as an individual, are in possession of a veritable catalog of rights, rights that have no corresponding duties, and no obligatory vector for their exercise. They are God's gift to you to use as you please, and that this is the essence of freedom. When a person educated in this way runs up against resistance, including moral criticism from peers, *they cannot but feel it as an attack*, and everyone knows that aggression against private individuals who are 'not hurting anyone else' (allegedly) must be deemed unjust and wrong.

# LOVE AND LIBERTY

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***Evil proliferates through tolerance.***

The problem with public tolerance of even seemingly mundane evils such as crass language, intemperance, lasciviousness, or personal impiety, is that evil becomes more pernicious when ignored. It does not just go away. Subtle behaviors (such as provocative dress) can have a notable influence, particularly on the young. It is a serious matter when they are discounted as irrelevant.

Prolonged exposure to a social atmosphere where evil is tolerated inevitably leads to the corruption of everyone involved, even if only in a very subtle way. Often the effects are not immediately apparent, and then after a generation everyone stands aghast at the fact that morals have decayed so far, when those same shocked people are the ones who took the first step, since after all it was only a very small thing.

It is impossible to imagine that a virtuous man who takes a job at a strip club will somehow retain his resilience to the sin of lust. Some may argue that men who struggle with lust are imbalanced from the start, and that these men are the problem, the situation itself being morally neutral. They suggest that healthier men would be impervious to erotic stimuli. Here again we stumble upon the naïve anthropology of the humanists, who somehow imagine that the human condition is beyond the impulses of the flesh.

We need only respond that any man for whom lust is not, at least occasionally, a problem is likely not a man with robust internal resources. To be unaffected by eros does not equate to being whole or healthy, and certainly not *morally superior*. Even the hermits of the desert, even the saints, dealt with this aspect of the human condition. We suspect that placing the blame entirely on the men stems from the individualistic moral mentality that says each person must see to themselves, and that our moral lives are not intertwined, and if you have a problem, it is your problem alone and I have nothing to do with it.

Thus, if we insist that it is bad moral hygiene to expose oneself to an immoral atmosphere due to the spiritual peril it involves, we can say that the same peril is experienced by any man who lives in a society

where there are no norms regulating sexual behavior, not to mention the type of clothing people can wear in public. And if we admit that strip clubs might feed the demons in anyone, then we should be able to see also that people (all ages and both sexes) are affected by the provocative clothing of women they encounter daily in American cities.

In our experience, the real issue is not that people don't understand what we've just said. Most would agree that ongoing exposure to temptation, which is to say, to a spiritually corrosive atmosphere, is not healthy. Where we run into a brick wall is when we suggest that the freedom of others might need to be curtailed to prevent this exposure. For example, people who adhere to the absolute view of rights will be disgusted at the thought of anyone regulating how much flesh can be revealed in public. Modern people are caught between evils, one of which they do not recognize because it is an object of worship, and so they cannot escape their contradictions.

The point here is that *leading others into temptation is a very powerful form of mental coercion*, and as we have already said, mental coercion can be good or evil depending on the presence of love and the spiritual clarity it involves. In this light, we can see that the decision to flaunt one's body amounts to a disregard for the spiritual good of others. It is no stretch of the moral imagination to say that in many cases it qualifies as abuse, and that a civilization that permits this permits abuse on a grand scale.

It is ironic that certain freedoms are defended by saying 'you cannot compel me' when in fact the behavior in question is itself an act of coercion bordering on compulsion, even if they choose to ignore it.

We have used the issue of provocative dress, but this is only because we've seen it discussed multiple times and so it is a familiar example. This is a general principle that touches on all aspects of social life, and we can say that both men and women can produce a morally corrosive atmosphere.

### *Private acts have social consequences.*

As we develop our position further and approach additional arguments about *social evil*, we can point out another misconception. When resistance is weighed and judged, it is usually examined in the specific context in which it was exercised. This means that the judgement about its appropriateness tends to only

take account of the immediate facts of the interaction, and this is misleading.

For example, let's imagine that one night a man wakes up in his own home to encounter a burglar. He shoots the burglar, who promptly dies. Some might protest that the force deployed—which in this case was *lethal force*—exceeded the threat, and therefore was unjustifiable homicide.

The problem is that this objection ignores the social nature of evil, that it is never contained within a specific situation where it played out. It was a private home and the decision to commit the crime was a private one, as was the decision of the homeowner to kill him. Nonetheless, the consequences of these private decisions are far from isolated. Let us imagine instead that, in the name of proportional response, the homeowner had simply threatened the burglar and driven him away. Or perhaps, in the name of turning the other cheek, he actually permitted the criminal to take what he wished and to go freely. What then? As a result of this *non-resistance*, the evil would have branched out in several directions. First, it would spread into the community. People would know that a thief was in their midst, and was still out and about, social trust would be undermined accordingly. No one would be able to go to sleep at night in peace, knowing that they could be next. What is perhaps worse is that the criminal, who might have been motivated by desperation, will be left to his own devices, and his only hope of salvation will be an act of heroic willpower on his part that is almost certainly out of the question.

In other words, to judge the evil consequences of theft only in terms of the monetary value of what has been stolen is to lie about the nature and scope of its evil.

This is also why terrorism is a horrible crime: it destabilizes society, destroying its unity by creating fear, revulsion, and confusion. *It renders the entire community more susceptible to temptation, since in desperation we are always more vulnerable to evil suggestions.*

It is important to understand that our obligation to contain evil is real even if we don't feel particularly offended by it, because by permitting it, we speak on behalf of *everyone*, and in a real sense we permit it to be visited on everyone by turning a blind eye.

### *Conditions for the use of physical force.*

At this point we can consolidate our position and say that several 'conditions' have emerged that can help us determine when the use of physical compulsion is justified.

First, we must be in the presence of evil. Not the presence of something that we find annoying, or that makes us uncomfortable, or that does not appeal to our temperament. We must be dealing with an evil will that is manifesting itself through external physical actions, and not merely a mistake on the part of a good, clear-sighted person, since in the case of mistakes it must be left to the individual, if at all possible, to re-establish self-government that might have been momentarily lost and correct themselves.

Second, we need a correct perception of the evil. We need to know with confidence that we are dealing with an evil through a true appraisal of its nature, discerning what the external action indicates about the will of the actor. This point goes without saying, but by mentioning it we are enabled to see the error implicit in social movements that downplay evil or reinterpret every vice or crime as a 'mistake' and tend to turn the criminal into the victim. By choosing to deny the presence of evil, it becomes easy to deny the issue of resistance to it. In short, only those who have seen real evil (and not by perpetrating it) have justification for confronting it by use of physical force.

Third, resistance via force must involve a *sincere love for the good*, not only our own good and that of the community, but of the villain. What should the man do who loves the good and is confronted by an evil that will destroy what he loves? This is the part of the question that escapes those indifferent souls who propose 'non-resistance' and toleration. Given that they cannot see *the good*, or are so lukewarm that they have no desire to protect it, how could we possibly expect them to see the reason for resisting the menace of evil? They see no evil, so the point is moot from the start. Their solution is not really a solution since it presupposes inner indifference. The question is entirely different for the one who is burning with love for virtue, truth, and spiritual perfection.

Fourth, we require a strong will capable of confident action for and against world processes. This is why strong character, courage, confidence, zeal, are all attributes traditionally encouraged in those whose vocation is to resist evil by force (police officers, soldiers, and

similar professions). It is not enough to see evil and to hate it: resistance can only be carried out by individuals with backbone. This is a rare thing today since in our society the manifestation of a strong will tends to be punished and shamed. That is why there are few public voices sharing these truths. Those who speak are usually representatives of the opposition, the indifferentists, who have intentionally rendered themselves impotent, both by habitually turning a blind eye to evil, or by ideologically denying its existence. Those with backbone, on the other hand, tend to become bitter in the face of a civilization that has made it clear that it wishes only to be left to its debauchery.

Fifth, we can say that physical force must be the last resort. All other intermediate means must be untenable. First and foremost this means that we need to be confident that the individual in question cannot correct the problem themselves, in the context of their own self-government. After that, mental coercion originating in others is the appropriate secondary option. When that proves powerless to stop the evil, then compulsion via physical force enters the picture.

This progressive approach is the only real option, and at each step we are faced with two possibilities: to stop resisting and do nothing more, or to carry resistance to the next degree. We either abandon our position and give way to the evil, or we fight it via the only practically feasible means.

***Physical compulsion cannot force a mental result.***

We have already mentioned this point, but it is worth repeating. We should never try to invoke a mental response directly via physical compulsion. Physical compulsion is at best a preliminary or a preparatory stage that makes education and proper socialization possible.

We can hope of course that the villain who is stopped by force from committing his crimes will eventually be in a position to understand the evil that is driving him, but we must always be cautious of the temptation to imagine our own interventions as being able to force this kind of epiphany. It puts too lofty a goal before such a blunt instrument as physical force.

This means that if we determine that it is permissible to compel citizens to serve in the military via the draft, we may choose to implement such a thing, but at the same time it would be foolish and

counterproductive to demand something like patriotic fervor from unwilling participants. You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him thank you for it. Anyone who is in a position to resist evil with physical force should also accept that it is not ideal and is not necessarily going to bring about any kind of conversion, at least not directly.

### *The nature of spiritual love.*

Since we have made the presence of *love* a determining factor in the legitimate use of force, we would do well to clarify as much as possible what we have in mind when we use this word.

We have already said that we do not have in mind the sentimental love that is more an emotion than an orientation of the will. Love does not pursue pleasure or enjoyment or wealth or even happiness. If these are experienced as byproducts of the pursuit of love, we may be grateful, but true *love* of the highest order yearns for the *spiritual perfection* of ourselves and others.

Spiritual perfection is often acquired at the cost of happiness, at the cost of comfort, and in spite of suffering and inconvenience. In other words, it is possible to cause someone suffering out of love for them, and it is possible to make someone very happy while degrading them.

We do not wish suffering on anyone, and we live in fear of the possibility that those we love might suffer, but fear of their spiritual debasement must always be stronger than the fear of their suffering.

It is easy to see why this is very distinct from 'worldly love' which pursues temporal well-being. This 'love' cannot imagine why earthly pleasures would ever be sacrificed for the sake of something beyond life. This is unfortunately the kind of love that motivates certain humanitarian movements, movements which displace ancient cultures and undermine religious life of the people being 'helped', all for the sake of 'modernization' and 'development', on the assumption that material standards are the only standards of living.

We can see too often that the objects of 'humanitarian' love end up being materially improved but spiritually impoverished.

### *Errors of compassion.*

The 'greatest commandment' given by Christ in the Gospel was to love God and love thy neighbor as thyself. The commandment is threefold, even trinitarian: love for self, for the other, and for God. Christ, Holy Spirit, Father. Identity, community, transcendence. This triple aim leads the Christian into rough waters because, due to the limits of his nature, being fallen, these aims seem to come into conflict and appear mutually exclusive. When in doubt, it is always the love for God that must act as the standard, and this gives the outward impression that the self or the other is being degraded, and that love is withheld. It is even possible to imagine situations where an expression of sympathy toward my neighbor would amount to a betrayal of love for God. This is not due to incoherence in the commandment so much as it is a result of divergence between my will (or my neighbor's will) and the will of God. When the will of God and the will of my neighbor are at odds, my relationship with my neighbor remains subordinate. If ever I am called to turn a blind eye to acts that offend God and destroy his creative work, whether out of 'sympathy' or distorted 'love' or humanitarian 'compassion', then it is time to withhold support from my neighbor.

In short, love is measured by the standard of the divine, and to promote or condone that which departs from that standard does not qualify as love. Those who do not measure love by the standard of God cannot understand why, for the love of God, we might allow or even *cause* the suffering of our fellow man. They will never understand why a moral 'no' is in the service of the person so rejected, and they will never understand that an indulgent 'yes' could mean hateful indifference to what really matters.

For those who measure love by the arbitrary standard of the world, any expression of 'negative love' will be reframed as an act of hate, and this is why anyone today who makes a public stand on a moral issue is immediately accused of hate speech or something similar.

In its early form, this all-accepting all-compassionate anti-spiritual love manifests itself as *indifference*. To modern progressives, the highest form of love is to be *indifferent* to the rightness or wrongness of acts, so long as they are pleasing to the one acting. To love someone is not to want the best for them, but to want them to do whatever they please, no matter if it degrades the soul. In such a world, nothing less than complete indifference to the spiritual health of others can be permitted. And again, that is only the bare

minimum—what is really expected and, in the long run, what comes to be demanded, is *approval*. We see this every day, as it becomes more clear that it is not enough to simply withhold our criticism and *accept* evil in our midst. We must *approve*. If you are not willing to openly express *approval*, you have implicitly admitted to your bigotry. First *acceptance*, then *approval*. But *approval* is not the final stage.

### *The limit of love.*

The limit of spiritual love is that it loves persons but *cannot love evil in persons*. This distinction between the person and 'their evil' is essential. If we ignore it, and if we see the evil and the person as inseparable, then we will fall into one of two dangers. Either we hate the person on account of their evil, in which case we hate something that we ought to have loved; or else, for the sake of the person, we give our love also to their evil, in which case we love something that ought to have been hated.

Due to the intermingling of good and evil in persons, the response of spiritual love will present itself as complex and even ambiguous. Think of the responses of Christ and the way they ranged from gentle and soothing to baffling and even physically aggressive. In each case we must assume that spiritual love was the animating force behind the response, and yet it presented itself in so many ways.

Spiritual love will not resemble worldly love since it desires first and foremost the spiritual perfection of the beloved. Spiritual love wants the beloved to live free—which is to say, free from sin, since virtue is the only true liberty. This is the opposite of the liberty the modern world would have us pursue, which amounts to the *freedom to live in whatever sin we feel like*. This is a loveless pursuit of liberty, liberty in the context of spiritual blindness.

This doesn't mean that spiritually sighted people should go around trying to force everyone to change in accordance with their spiritual vision. We have already explained that this cannot be done because the only real transformation must be a process of self-education, as opposed to change under brute force or external compulsion.

It does mean, however, that when evil is discerned in a person, our attitude toward them changes, and must change in accordance with the magnitude of the evil that is present. It is simply not possible or appropriate to treat a man possessed of great evil with the same

respect and affection as one who is spiritually healthy. In some cases, spiritual love calls for gentleness and compassion, and when permissible we should give these things to our neighbors. But in cases of serious spiritual danger, true spiritual love might involve withdrawal and isolation, and, in the extreme, it might call for the use of force.

The point is that even a negative response, for example one of withdrawal from the beloved, is a 'blessing' for the one who receives it, because it is the receiving of love and is for the sake of love.

### *Communion is inescapable.*

Now we will more directly address the social nature of evil, how it is communicated, and its inescapability.

The modern world operates on an individualistic anthropology that is not only anti-spiritual but is even *anti-social*. We could even say that our civilization is *sociopathic* because the truths that it ignores are essential to the healthy flourishing of human communities. It not only does not pursue these truths, but actively undermines them. One such ignored truth is *the community of persons in good or evil*. Were this understood, it would be easier to comprehend the duties and obligations such a 'universal connectedness' would impose on people who live together.

The first thing to be said is that the human person is a complex of body, psyche, and spirit. Today only the first term is acknowledged. The second (psyche) is talked about but misunderstood to be but an extension of the first term, situated on its level, and so only presents itself in a degraded form. For all intents and purposes, the psyche and the spirit are unknown, and our anthropology is stunted accordingly. If these terms were rediscovered, it would open vast horizons for mystery and self-exploration that are currently closed off. Self-knowledge is only a part of a part of a part. The truth is that most people know themselves very poorly. A counterintuitive result of this self-ignorance is that we do not understand how enmeshed we are—how open our hearts are to the influences of the world. Our inner lives are not nearly as private as we imagine them to be. My mind and will are hidden from me to the degree that I am ignorant, but they are not hidden from the world by virtue of my ignorance. The world is what it is, and it touches us deeply, moves us in ways we do not notice.

Since our anthropology has simplified things to their most superficial level, we in turn develop an utterly simplistic view of the self, and based on a few half-baked notions about personality, we think that we have insight into our being, when we have hardly scratched the surface. From this poor starting point, we rest easy and assume that we all know ourselves *completely*. We assume that our secrets are ours to keep, and that what we reveal and what we hide are under our full control. We project this *fantasy of privacy* onto the people we meet.

The truth is quite the opposite. We reveal almost everything immediately. We may dress as we wish but there are no clothes for the psyche. Even on a purely physical level, the body discloses much of our inner condition through posture, gait, mannerism, and facial expression, and the only reason we think we have secrets is due to our inability to see ourselves and the fact that, even admitting this disclosure, there are few people who can *consciously* interpret these silent communications. It is here that the *unconscious* becomes important, because here much of the 'communication' and 'communion' takes place in terms of subtle bodily and psychic signs. *It is here that the communication of good and evil becomes inescapable*. Since the modern world is blind to this subtlety, the social trafficking of good and evil takes place entirely in the shadows.

We imagine that we are free to associate with only people we choose, or that we find agreeable, but the fact of our bodily-psychic-spiritual complexity means that we associate to some degree with everyone we encounter. Every day when we get out of bed we enter into a collective flow of reciprocal inducements. We exchange *influences* with the world around us, even people we did not notice and whose names we never learn. It is terrifying to truly comprehend our vulnerability. We live in a *psychic chaos*.

All of this is a matter of involuntary human experience and does not cease to operate simply because we do not consciously pursue relationships with people.

Part of the difficulty here lies in the perceived 'total separation' between mind and body. We could blame Descartes, but this error naturally presents itself in the absence of a true spiritual anthropology. We struggle to see that the attributes of the soul 'bleed into' the body and through it, into external actions. This should come as no surprise to those acquainted with Catholic anthropology,

wherein the soul is the 'form of the body'. The body speaks volumes about that which informs it. We walk around with far more on display than we would like to admit.

This is made more complicated by the fact already mentioned, that we do not know ourselves very well but think we know all that there is to know. Even if you tried to veil the signals you conveyed to others, you could only control those you knew about, which are the minority.

One result of this constant communion between beings is that we always know far more about people than we realize, and much of what we know was never consciously disclosed to us by the person we are observing. *We find that we just know*. Most of this 'data' is perceived unconsciously or semi-consciously, so it never rises to the level of conscious admission. It is felt as an impression, and the fact that many impressions are false does not mean that there is nothing to them. It only means that we are incompetent in our conscious, rational interpretation of these subtle communications.

***To ignore this is not to avoid it.***

Given the reality of constant mutual influence, what can we say about the person that, for whatever reason, chooses to ignore the nature of what is being communicated? They cannot escape the exchange since this would require the alteration of human nature itself. They remain exposed but choose not to apply their discernment to the process, and this attitude has three consequences. First, they become willfully blind even to those aspects of the *reciprocal exchange of influences* that they might have been able to control or modify. Second, they become more ignorant of their own nature than they were before. Third, they become incompetent to discuss virtually any question of a moral and social nature, since they have discarded most of the raw material needed to obtain any meaningful insight into the subject.

***There is no purely private good or evil.***

Alexander the Great allegedly said: "Remember, upon the conduct of each depends the fate of all."

With this maxim in mind, we can better understand the Catholic teaching on 'social sin', which states that when one person is (morally) victorious, we all share in the victory, and when one falls to sin, we all have a share in the defeat.

We must not oversimplify, of course. Those who participate only secondarily do not share the sin in precisely the same relation or degree as the one directly responsible for it, but they do share it in *some* relation and to *some* degree.

Moving from general social observations to the question of morality, we can say that if there is any truth to what we said above about the inescapable communion of persons, then there is no evil act that remains the private possession of the individual who sins. There is not some impenetrable barrier around my soul that encapsulates my sin and ensures that it is mine alone, and the same goes for my neighbor. Should he entertain demons in his heart, there is no security fence that can effectively contain them there, and I will meet them sooner or later.

In countless ways every day, the good and the evil within us are expressed and, in being expressed, are transmitted to others. This occurs regardless of whether I am trying to transmit my evil to others or not, and in spite of any conscious intent to the contrary. We cannot contain our evil. This is why it is good to eradicate particular evils that we do know about and to which we are susceptible. When possessed of a vice, we are *infectious*, not in the sense that I may pass my addiction to others who are not at all prone to addiction, but that my poor moral hygiene will, in some way that I may never understand, affect the hygiene of those around me, especially those closest to me, who are most vulnerable to my influence. Unless the inner victory has been achieved and there is no longer this particular evil in my heart, then it is susceptible to transmission.

Again, this applies to both good and evil. No kind act is limited in its consequences only to the person who is shown the kindness. They are, of course, the most direct recipient of the kindness, but in a multitude of direct and indirect consequences, mankind as a whole is benefited. The same is true of any evil act, even if it takes place when I am alone and if its origin is in my mind, in the form of some horrifying *idea* that I permit to take root. I will carry it with me, and *it will speak of itself*.

It is very disturbing for the individualist to be told that they cannot simply ‘be left alone’. For man, there is no ‘alone’. Man is placed in relation to others the moment he is brought into being. To ‘be’ is to ‘be in communication’ with people, even if this is reduced to the

emotional and auditory communication between a mother and her unborn child.

We can understand why people might refuse to acknowledge this, because it implies at one and the same time a vulnerability and a great power. It implies the possession of a far-reaching influence that normal people have no interest in wielding, and so they deny that they wield it. But it is not up to them, and by denying that they possess this power, they do untold damage to others and permit others to do damage in return.

### *Conclusions based on the communal nature of good and evil.*

Some conclusions are now unavoidable, and these will help us ascertain rules governing the moral use of physical compulsion.

First, we can now see that even private evil is a public menace, regardless of whether it is expressed openly through action. Everything is communicable. A private lust is a danger to the community even if it never 'materializes' as harassment, rape, or adultery.

Second, we have a duty to pursue good and eradicate evil *in ourselves*. The idea that we can each go our own way and that, if my neighbor chooses to embrace a sinful lifestyle, then he alone suffers the consequences, can now be seen as utterly naïve and irresponsible.

On the contrary, I will *without doubt* do damage to others if I am not actively resisting evil within myself. This means that the pursuit of goodness via self-education is imperative, and the public flaunting of a 'personal decision' not to pursue goodness is, in this light, enough to justify some level of resistant inducement on the part of the community. *We are involved in mutual improvement or mutual destruction*, and this implies a real responsibility to pursue moral improvement.

To elaborate on this second point, we can say that *no one has the right to ignore the presence of evil in themselves*. This is not a political statement meant to justify a totalitarian level of social control for the sake of enforced spiritual development, since this would be a contradiction in terms. We are only pointing out that a 'right' to pursue evil cannot exist and if justice permits it to exist it

can only be in those instances where intervention would result in a more serious evil, in which case it is not so much a 'right' that is in question, but rather an implicit admission that evil will manifest itself and we cannot control all of it.

To put it bluntly, there is no such thing as poisoning *only* your own well. All of our wells combine at a certain depth. They are connected and the poison you add to yours will inevitably leach into the wells of others and, on a large enough scale, the whole *spiritual reservoir* is contaminated such that purity is no longer accessible to anyone.

### *Moral education is a public duty.*

Neglect of spiritual hygiene turns communities into hotbeds of moral disease wanting quarantine. We do not call for immediate physical quarantine of persons who sin, for reasons already given. However, there are psychic and social forms of quarantine, and these forms of coercion can be utilized to induce people who show no regard for the wellbeing of the community, and it can be done without radically disrupting their lives. In traditional cultures this was common. To socially ostracize a person who promotes a lifestyle that is generally considered immoral is a way of *psychically quarantining* them so that their influence is minimized, and so that physical removal does not have to occur.

At any rate, the underlying principle is that moral education is a public duty, not in the sense that the public authority ought to be responsible for conducting it in its structure and method, but in the sense that it is a duty imposed on all individuals by the fact of their participation in society; and this is in addition to the *private duty* for self-education, the latter being facilitated primarily by the traditional religions. But do not be confused: the latter does not replace the former.

### *The importance of a shared vision of the good.*

One of the reasons that religion was always placed at the top of the social hierarchy in traditional societies was the awareness of the *communality of good and evil*, and the necessity of collective spiritual development for the sake of *shared moral hygiene*.

The problem that faces us today is that contemporary political systems deny the universal responsibility (of persons and of public authorities) to pursue the good. Rather, they propose to limit the purpose of government to the enforcement of certain liberties,

which is just as contradictory as it sounds. This reduces the whole purpose of government to that of 'rights referee', and how terrible it would be to play referee in a game wherein the rules are always changing and with players who each think they are playing a different game.

The result of modern political philosophy is that not only do societies not possess a shared vision of the good, but they do not even consider it legitimate to pursue or discuss such a thing. Each citizen is told to do as he wishes so long as he does not infringe on the rights of others. *The good* does not factor in.

Faced with this situation, much of what we have said would require delicate interpretation before it could be given external implementation, and one should be extremely careful about attempting to translate what we've said here into political action. We will repeat that we are not trying to build a party platform but to render the world more comprehensible to a few people.

We feel compelled to emphasize this warning not because political resistance to evil is forbidden, and in fact it would be very good *in principle*, but because the governments we know today are not guided by a religious authority and therefore have a distorted and partial understanding of the good, not to mention humanity itself. Thus, contemporary public authorities are so incompetent that they could not even participate in the discussion we are having.

It is permissible for the government to have a role in the shared pursuit of the good, but only as a late-stage externalization of that pursuit. The political authority is enlisted organically in a spiritual project already underway. Society must first and foremost decide where its loyalties are, and the soul of a people must achieve some level of unity of spiritual vision, or else any government action on behalf of spiritual education is bound to become monstrous and misguided.

### *Worship of liberty ends up justifying abuse.*

Given the contemporary obsession with liberty and the fact that nothing can be justified to people today unless it appeals to liberty and nothing condemned unless it affronts liberty, we will find it beneficial to frame our comments as follows:

There is legitimacy to the idea of giving people latitude to act as they wish, but perhaps it is time to talk not about the right to live immorally, which is basically the freedom to abuse one's neighbors, and instead defend *the freedom to live without being subject to constant moral and spiritual abuse*. Is that no a truer freedom? Can such a freedom be pursued without creating its own abuses? Such a freedom qualifies more as a 'right' than most of the other rights in the current political catalog. Why does it receive no consideration in the on-going battle of rights against rights, freedom against freedom?

Evil in our day has found liberty-worship to be a supreme instrument. Even factions so opposed as American political parties are at least unanimous in the way they gush slogans about liberty. Having established the script in this way, evil no longer has to fight long and hard to convince people that sinful acts are permissible: it merely has to appeal to *freedom as such*, and if these acts seem to coincide with 'the exercise of liberty' then the conversation about their moral essence does not have to come up. Once the case is made *in terms of liberty*, a flood of well-meaning but simple-minded people appear to defend evil, and they take up the side of evil in the name of good.

Think, for example, of slogans such as "I may not agree with what you say, but I'll die defending your right to say it." As noble as this sounds, from a moral point of view it is terrifying. No better statement of the perverse outcome of liberty-worship could be found. It explicitly admits that truth and goodness are irrelevant in the face of liberty, taken here as 'Liberty-with-a-capital L', an absolute semi-divine value. And once goodness loses its standing as a primary criterion for action, odd things start to happen. Even good people allow themselves to be enlisted in defense of something they know damn well to be untrue. In the example just given, when the noble freedom-fighter promises to die defending the right of the liar to lie, we might ask: defense against whom? Who threatens the liar such that you must defend him? The freedom-fighter might say: I will defend him from totalitarianism, etc., but in practice, they defend the liar first and foremost from the partisans of truth.

In this way, evil appeals to freedom as a means of escaping restraint and through this appeal, recruits the naïve to fight in its defense, as it proceeds to wreak spiritual havoc on society. For those who would resist, no freedom from abuse is permitted.

*Here we can see that the liberty promised by modern regimes is liberty of a certain flavor, and heavily prejudiced.*

Any spiritually aware community will constantly have reason to use compulsion, first mentally and then physically, in order to provide an atmosphere of *true freedom*, which is to say, freedom from abuse by evil people.

Not only do individuals have the obligation to resist evil in themselves, but a properly ordered society also has this obligation and must act on it according to reasonable means.

### *There is no neutrality.*

Having come to understand how evil communicates itself, we can no longer ignore our situation: the moral struggle is already commenced, and we find ourselves thrust into the middle of it. We are either permitting the propagation of evil throughout society, or else we are resisting it via all permissible means.

This is the human experience unless we have blinded ourselves to it. *To be human is to engage in a moral confrontation*.

Even minimally sensitive people know that it is impossible not to *experience* evil when it presents itself before us. We cannot help but feel ourselves somehow *involved* in the atrocities we witness, even when we are assured that they are 'none of our business' or when popular ideologies tell us that these people 'are not hurting anyone'. We sense the lie and that part of us urges us to act, and it takes a great deal of training to override that impulse.

Evil beckons, solicits, and demands affirmation or rejection. Once the anthropological truth about good and evil is known, there is no neutrality.

### *Evil is by nature aggressive.*

Sometimes people talk about evil as if it will pass us by if we just ignore it, as a thing we may observe without risk to ourselves. They present sin as a thing encapsulated within the person who sins, in such a way that we can pass by if we wish and involvement is purely optional, such that only a moral busybody would be interested in someone else's 'private affairs'. They ask us: "What is it to you if this man sins? It isn't as if he were holding a gun to your head, making you sin with him. Let him be."

Even on the level of practical experience this is demonstrably false. Sin propagates itself and what begins as a 'private affair' can consume an entire nation. Think of the most pernicious ideas in the history of politics. Were these plans not at one point the 'private affair' of one man, and at what point would it have been reasonable for someone else to intervene?

As for free speech that ignores its responsibility to truth, we encounter the same problem. If we permit someone to lie, the lie will likely be believed by someone, and this is enough to qualify as an abuse. Should we, on the basis of our infatuation with liberty, permit this abuse to go unchecked? Many lies are convincing and convincing lies left unchecked become truths. This happens all the time on the social level. Statements that would have been understood to be nonsense a few decades ago are now considered 'facts' for those who become convinced by them, and those who simply defend the alternative are today informed that they are 'spreading hate', etc.

Evil cannot be left to itself because evil is aggressive. Evil wants freedom first, but it can never stop there and eventually demands approval and finally participation.

Evil is *evangelical*. To opt for non-resistance is not to stand aloof but to be enlisted. This is why the 'neutral bystanders' wake up one day to find themselves either participants or heretics because the idea they ignored became an article of faith for their peers, and then it is too late.

The choice cannot be dismissed as a false dichotomy. Admittedly, a similar form of reasoning is frequently deployed in politics in order to drive voters to the voting booths. We've all heard the specious argument where we are told that if we don't vote for *this person* then we are implicitly voting for *that person*, and so on. Clearly, though, we are dealing with a difference of level and that this dualism, while disingenuous and frankly untrue when used in the context of party politics, is weighty and authentic when it comes to the fundamentally moral situation in which every person finds himself. That which, in elections, is a manipulative exaggeration is, in the soul, the very nature of things. In the order of social systems, economic theory, and political programs, there is always a multiplicity of possible solutions. Dichotomizing is almost always the mark of deceit. But on the level of good and evil, it is not so. *There is no neutrality in this order of things.*

This is why we say that evil must be resisted first and foremost because it is aggressive, and to ignore it is actually to submit to it. To cite again the work of Ivan Ilyin:

"Only one deprived of life experience could fail to see the *aggressiveness* of evil, its natural tendency to expand its possession, its domineering pressure, and then imagine that the power of evil can and must be exhausted by appeasement, patient humility and the giving over of all sacred things, human souls and the entire culture to a sacrificial doom."[5]

### *Evil makes use of all means.*

It is sometimes said that the devil is happy to quote Scripture as long as he can guide its interpretation and use it for his purposes. This demonstrates the tendency of evil to enlist everything and everyone. Indeed, the devil has no prejudice when it comes to his partnerships and his means. *Evil does not pursue evil by evil means, but by any means, even those we might normally consider 'good'.*

Evil takes the form of kind words—spoken without honesty. Evil promotes love—but it is a perverse love, without reference to truth. Evil encourages charity—but it is a patronizing and degrading charity.

### *The tragic encounter.*

Whenever we witness evil, we are put in a tragic situation because we are tested *in the moment* insofar as a response is demanded. We are put on the spot, without warning or adequate preparation. In the face of this spontaneous trial, we are bound to become flustered, maybe even indignant at being called out in such an invasive way. We can see why it is so common to simply step back and watch the situation unfold, or to avert our gaze and keep walking. We justify this and tell ourselves that we did all we could, after all *we barely had time to think*. In such moments we are forced to either shrink back or to step forward and *reveal ourselves*, and in revealing ourselves, to either come out against or for evil.

First and foremost, we must understand that to defer the test is to fail it. To choose not to *reveal oneself* in that moment is already a self-revelation. There is no opting out of this test, and to meet these situations with escapism is to be defeated by them, even if it is a

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[5] Ivan Ilyin, *On Resistance to Evil by Force*, p. 150.

more comfortable defeat than we might have suffered had we acted openly.

Every witness is implicated in every crime. This does not mean that every witness is guilty of the crime, since often the situation is truly out of our hands, but even in such cases, when we were powerless to help, we *respond* all the same, even if only internally, and that response is of a certain character.

Evil actions act as a catalyst. They are like a mirror reflecting our moral character, putting on public display the spiritual maturity of everyone in the vicinity. When your gaze passes by this mirror of evil, what do you see in your reflection?

The fact that we tend to fail this test and, through silence or hesitation, permit ourselves to be implicated, is a demonstration of the importance of inner preparedness. As we observed, in these situations *we do not have time to think*, and at that point training is what matters, and an absence of training becomes obvious. Thus, we find the necessity of *moral training*. Only by preparing ourselves ahead of time can we hope to meet evil with a confident response *in the moment*. The easier path, which is to ignore or minimize the test as 'none of our business', or choose not to think about this most difficult part of life, sets us up for complicity and spineless behavior.

We reiterate: encounters with evil are tragic, victimizing everyone indirectly, even passersby, who, with a little foresight and honest preparation, might have acted differently. For some of us, these are the moments we think about late at night many years after the incident, wishing we had had the strength of character to act courageously or honestly when instead we shrank back, looked the other way, or just observed in silence.

### *Inherited victory and squandered social capital.*

There is talk in some contemporary literature of the importance of 'social capital', by which is usually meant the immaterial common goods that healthy communities build up and enjoy, and which should not be squandered.

*Social trust* is a primary form of social capital. It is what permits people to trust that their governing authorities do intend to serve the people, that their doctors know what they are talking about, that teachers have the best interest of students in mind, that economic

structures are relatively just, and so on. As social trust is squandered and undermined, the community falls apart because they can no longer put faith in the institutions responsible for the preservation of order, health, education, and industry. We are seeing this right now as new generations develop in a context where they cannot put their faith in anything because nothing seems trustworthy.

We bring up this example because it is obvious that this 'capital' takes much longer to accumulate than to squander. It was built up over many generations, perhaps even several centuries, and is the result of hard work carried out by men of good character.

To return to our subject, we would insist that the spiritual and moral capital of a community, which is to say, the soundness of its social conscience and its awareness of moral law, works in a similar way. It is built up only slowly, over centuries, but can be depleted very quickly when ignored.

The United States, at least insofar as it is a modern nation state, was founded by Europeans who brought with them a very specific type of social consciousness. The *conscience* they possessed was not pulled from thin air but came with a definite pedigree. This conscience was *Christian*, both in its immediate content and in its historical lineage. This *conscience* (and, for that matter, this particular flavor of *consciousness*) took many centuries to develop, and its development was pursued with intention and discipline until it became part of the very *spiritual temperament* of Western civilization.

When the American Founders wrote with enlightened optimism about the moral uprightness of men, they took it for granted that their listeners possessed a degree of spiritual education. They were correct in this assumption, but what they did not acknowledge, and what people today know nothing about, is that it had come at a cost and was not part of the nature of man so much as it was part of the inheritance of Christendom—that civilization which had recently been demolished. Thus, they did not understand that without constant maintenance this *moral edifice* begins to decay and disintegrate and will eventually revert to barbarism. It may revert immediately, or it might be a prolonged crisis of faith, but into disrepair it will fall.

It has been the struggle of mankind throughout the ages to fight evil and establish a foothold for good, and a civilization is worthy of the

name insofar as it successfully educates its people about the good such that they can recognize it when they see it. We stand on the shoulders of giants in ways that we could not possibly perceive. We have no idea how much our very perception of reality, not to mention our discernment of the beautiful and the ugly, the true and the false, is influenced by the hard work of our ancestors.

We sit in a spiritual fortress that we did not build, and unable to see this, we put no work into maintaining its defenses. We do not even think that it needs defense. Now it is in shambles, overrun by an enemy we cannot even recognize as such, so far has our blindness proceeded.

The very idea that we could deal with evil by 'peaceful non-resistance' could only arise in ignorance of the historical work that was involved in establishing the moral knowledge we take for granted. It was an ancient project wherein the best people gathered together to curb evil and then established a moral discipline to keep evil at bay once defeated.

The pacifist of today enjoys the fruits of a violent struggle won by predecessors he does not acknowledge and does not think he needs. He basks in an inherited peace that he is in the process of slowly destroying.

We could say that civilization develops when men of strong will and character come forward and not only defeat evil through force but also civilize their fellow men through the establishment of order and by carving out a social space wherein a collective and on-going spiritual education can take place.

It is true that paradise is not built by compulsion, but hell only retreats when it is fought, and physical force is that last resort which, when necessary, makes space for the more subtle and cooperative project of spiritual and moral development that is not physically compelled.

To build a paradise, sometimes a hell must be cleared away; and once cleared away, it's influence must be perpetually fended off. Evil is always encroaching. It is too easy for doctrinaire pacifists to ignore these observations and to take for granted the peace which they presently enjoy.

### *Persuasion and inducement.*

We have already observed that to demand consent before compulsion is to ignore the complexity of the human condition, since at times consent is *implied*, and even if not implied, there are considerations that outweigh the need for consent.

The same holds true for the concept of persuasion, which is desirable and ought to be attempted but is not the last resort beyond which nothing can be done. Even here the line is not so clear. It can be very difficult to see when persuasion becomes compulsion, since as we have already observed, argument is in fact a form of mental inducement and insofar as it succeeds it involves the imposition of a will on another will to achieve a desired result. By insisting on 'persuasion', we still do not avoid the problem of compulsion. We merely insist on certain forms of delivery.

If we preclude the possibility of 'going all the way', then all our verbal half-measures become an impotent joke, an empty threat, like the man who shouts and threatens but just looks silly because everyone knows that when push comes to shove, he'll do nothing. Words themselves should always carry a promise of action. In a purely verbal paradigm of conflict resolution, there can be no such promise, and words themselves lose whatever seriousness they might have had.

*The formula should run as follows: induce by persuasion, and induce without persuasion when necessary.*

# VOCATION AND CONFRONTATION

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***The warrior and the teacher.***

We said at the very beginning of this discussion that there is no one-size-fits-all imperative when it comes to the *form of resistance* that a person must deploy. This means that although resistance is obligatory, the form of resistance is personally determined, at least in part.

The situation always carries unique complexities, but the condition of each individual carries even more complexities and these are what dictate who must and must not resort to physical compulsion. For one thing, the use of physical compulsion, especially in the extreme form of combat, carries great spiritual risks, and not everyone is able to face them. But aside from that, there are questions of general vocation and part of the misunderstanding about physical compulsion is the mistaken tendency to project these actions onto people for whom these actions would never be appropriate.

For example, if your vocation is to teach, meaning that you possess spiritual clarity and verbal fluency, which translate to a high aptitude for conveying ideas, then you would likely be called to the service of the truth using these skills. This personal *calling* helps us 'delimit' the form and degree of resistance to evil to which you are called. Note that we did not say that vocation is *everything*, but it is significant as a starting point.

If you possess the nature of a teacher, then your vocation would indicate that when resistance to evil is called for and the appropriate form of resistance is that of persuasion in the form of a call to clarity, hoping to awaken by words the love of truth, then you can be of great service. It is here that you provide a powerful service to the community. However, outside of that specific context, it might happen that your aptitudes do not fit, and that it would be an act of pride or ignorance for you to go further since your aptitudes and temperament will doom you to failure.

Too often we deny this complexity and unconsciously try to universalize the appropriate response to evil. It is ignored that in situations wherein verbal persuasion has proven futile, that a different sort of person with a different set of attributes is required.

It requires the *warrior* type. This does not imply an alteration in values or morality. Just because the warrior and the teacher use drastically different means of delivery, it does not follow that one serves good and the other serves evil, or that one is weak and inadequate when it comes to resistance while the other is strong and effective. They serve the good in different capacities, and each is 'weak and ineffective' only when they try to switch places and step outside of their competence.

The vocation of the warrior does not require that he display verbal fluidity, and it is no insult to the soldier if he is unlearned, or ignorant of high moral theory, and proves unable to provide sophisticated justifications for what he must do. His service does not involve the use of speeches to awaken spiritual sight in the mind of the evildoer. On the contrary, those called to *persuade through words* have likely failed in their task by the time the warrior makes his appearance. If anyone has the right to condescend, it is not the academic but the warrior, since the failure of the teacher is what allowed the situation to get bad enough that he had to show up. At any rate, the warrior is called to meet evil by physically intervening, by using direct physical force to control the damage the evil is doing. The resulting confrontation may involve injury, bloodshed, and destruction, and this eruption will naturally spread fear, suffering, hunger, death, grief, confusion, etc. But all of this is permitted on the grounds that it is the only way left to resist evil that does not involve surrendering to it and *joining forces with it*.

We should pause and acknowledge that even in this explanation we have had to oversimplify. It is, of course, possible that persons of mixed vocation exist who are competent in academics and at combat. We only mean to say that this is not the norm. Additionally, we do not mean to give the impression that once physical force is called for, then everything else goes out the window. Even during war, certain narrow possibilities for the expression of love still present themselves, as demonstrated by the rules concerning the treatment of prisoners and the killing of the wounded. It has always been a test of righteousness whether an army *remembers* the other forms of love during conflict or if, on the contrary, they give in to brutality plain and simple.

And so again, we will recall that by the time the warrior is called to the scene, the situation has clearly gone beyond civil discourse and rendered impossible the 'lighter' forms of resistance such as the pressure of social disapproval. What is necessary, in the last resort,

is the *clearing away of hell* so that a semblance of peace can be reestablished.

### *Great spiritual teachers demonstrate the exception.*

The proponents of non-resistance will sooner or later try to point to Christ and observe (rightly) that we cannot imagine him wielding a sword or a machine gun. And since Christians wish above all to imitate Christ, then that is all there is to it. Question settled, they seem to think.

But the great spiritual teachers, whether Christ or Buddha, tend to demonstrate through their lives the extreme of spiritual unworldliness and alienation. Their examples are clearly intended to bring us to an awareness of spiritual realities. *Christ's kingdom was not of this world*. Christ's divine mission, which is to say his nature and his vocation, excluded the possibilities of outright bloodshed, to be sure, since as one man with one life he could not exemplify every possibility. But that he did not take up the sword does not mean that the sword cannot be taken up, and in fact his teaching does not exclude this, as is clear from the advice his Apostles would later offer to soldiers in the Roman military, not to mention the consistent doctrine of the Church since that time, which has always more or less allowed for the necessity of war and therefore the legitimization of the warrior vocation.

All Christians are called to be unified with Christ and to follow Christ and to integrate the truth of his Gospel, but it is simple and naïve to conclude that this requires everyone to respond to evil precisely (in word and action) as he did in every situation he faced. His responses were opportunities for spiritual education, and so they called him *teacher*. Recall what was said above about the vocation of the teacher, and we can say that Christ was the teacher *par excellence*. But not all of us are *teachers*.

### *The problem of the idealist.*

The pacifists are not entirely wrong in their sentiments, only wrong in oversimplifying things and, in oversimplifying, denying certain possibilities that seem contrary to holiness.

They are right in sensing that physical combat represents, in some way, a move away from holiness as an ideal, and that killing is, so to speak, a 'descent' from righteousness that Christ personified.

Sensing only the *imperfection* of this mode of resistance, they deny the validity of any path that leads to such a confrontation.

The reality is that certain actions can be less than ideal but still absolutely necessary, and if they are necessary, they cannot be *sinful*. Moreover, if truly necessary, then they are in a sense obligatory.

*We come here to a hard teaching*. In the sections that follow, we will explain why the warrior is called to fight on ground already lost, not physically but spiritually, and that this is the nature of his vocation and so the *fact* of his occupying a position of *imperfection* and of *unrighteousness* does not necessarily render it *wrong*, much less *sinful*.

This proves difficult to grasp for idealists, since they begin with the ideal and then set about trying to reconcile contingencies with the ideal and deny everything that does not lend itself to easy reconciliation. We find that the extremes of human experience, of which physical confrontation is one, are always difficult to reconcile with ideals. This does not mean that our spiritual or moral ideals lose their value and that we must abandon them in favor of a compromised pragmatism; instead it teaches us that the real skill of adhering to an ideal is not to insist on its superficially perfect application but to be perceptive and prudent enough to see how the ideal can be adapted to concrete situations which *will never conform exactly to an ideal*. In other words, if you are going to be a rigorous idealist, you risk becoming useless in the face of any real-life problem.

### *The victories of non-violent movements.*

Inevitably someone will bring up Martin Luther or Mahatma Gandhi and offer their accomplishments as proof that ‘violence is never the answer’. The objection is easily addressed.

Keep in mind that these names do not represent the side of 'non-resistance', since they were certainly *resisting their adversaries*. What they represent is *non-violence*, and that is a different question. On that point, we can say that their successes were due to situational factors. They prove nothing about the unfortunate necessity of *force*.

Gandhi and Luther proved that, given favorable circumstances, non-violence can sometimes be effective. Nothing more, nothing less.

Had the British colonial project not been *already waning*, the outcome could have been drastically different.

For Britain, the choice was ultimately between massacre and decolonization. Had the shift of power not already been underway *in Gandhi's favor*, Britain might have opted for massacre. But they had seen the writing on the wall. When it becomes necessary to slaughter one's subjects in order to control them, it is safe to say that power has already been lost. This is why massacre is rarely an adequate tactic for maintaining power. We say 'rarely' because in some cases it can have its effect, although this is typically between two alien peoples or powers, such as the mutual massacres of the whites and Indians over control of the American frontier. Speaking on the Native Americans, it seems reasonable to suggest that if they had adopted the Gandhi/Luther approach from the beginning, it would have only hastened their cultural demise.

We are not trying to argue that non-violence is imprudent. Certainly it is desirable. Non-violent methods should always be chosen first in the battle against evil. But as noble as the principle sounds, there is no magic in it.

Again, we can suggest that these ‘civil rights’ movements came at a moment in history that was favorable to their success. They faced off against opponents who were far more hesitant to opt for slaughter than the oppressors of the past. It is likely that the reason we don’t hear of many other examples of (successful) non-violence in the historical record is because outside of the modern world, such men were simply killed, along with all of their followers.

As a general rule, non-violence is not advisable when one’s opponent has already resorted to violence. That is why the examples frequently cited are groups that have already lost all meaningful power and have nothing else to put on the table but their own lives. And so they put their lives on the table, in the hope that their opponents will not just shoot them and call it a day. Sometimes it works, if the opponents are civilized enough, and sometimes it does not.

### *Different worlds of meaning.*

This is the point at which men of *contemplation* and men of *action* show how different are the worlds they occupy. The scholar and the

warrior operate via a different *interpretive apparatus*, a different *life hermeneutic.*

What is meaningful and true and good is always the same for every person *in terms of ultimate ends,* but in the order of human experience *the locus of meaning* for each is radically different. The man of contemplation (of which the teacher is an example), deals with meaning in the form of concepts and with a view toward the possession of pure unadulterated truth. For this reason, he cannot readily grasp the *hermeneutic* used by the warrior. For the latter, immanence, rather than abstraction, is the point of departure, and so the warrior sets himself to confronting a chaos and overcoming it *in the physical domain*. Through this fight he approaches the same good as the contemplative, but he approaches by a different road.

What distinguishes the man of action (of which the warrior is an example) is that he begins in the here and now, in the concrete, and so takes for granted the imperfection and contradiction of circumstances. If he demanded perfect order before acting, he could never act and would become useless. For someone who must *act*, and *act within time and place*, it is absurd to demand the path of perfection and purity first and foremost, as contemplatives try to do, and only to proceed once assurances of perfect righteousness are given. Only the monk or the academic, safely walled into the convent or the university, can emphasize perfection as if that were a feasible starting point for a life actually lived.

### *The religious view and the humanist view.*

Humanism generates massive blind spots for its adherents. The foremost of these is the reality of human evil, and the fact that we are all immersed in it.

The humanist tends to imagine man according to the image of Rousseau, who thought that man was most noble in his primitive state (a 'noble savage') whose corruption is mostly the work of external pressure and perverse education. Civilization, in this view, is a corrupting and weakening influence. Man is naturally good but has lately become a victim of bad upbringing, etc. The irony is all too obvious if we recall that Rousseau had five children and delivered them all to a Paris orphanage.

The anthropology of the timeless religious teaching, on the other hand, agrees that man is in some way *good*, but that at the same

time he is subject to a *fallenness*, and because of this he constantly fails to distinguish between good and evil. He is daily deceiving himself and others and although he desires the good, since it is impossible to desire anything else, he struggles to recognize it and is always choosing evil out of ignorance and blind passion.

For Christianity, this predicament is a result of the human condition and is not something inflicted on people by external pressure or distortion. In fact, the religions diverge from humanism drastically in teaching that the only thing that saves man from his moral/spiritual ignorance is precisely the imposition of an external will (or wills) in the form of community and religious education, and it is precisely these influences, and not some inborn nobility, that *save him from the hell of his own ignorance*.

Man desires the good but in terms of *realizing* this good in his being, via thought and action, it remains a potentiality and not an actuality, and he is always 'missing the mark', hence the idea that he is 'a sinner'. The 'natural goodness' of man is but an inkling that he does not understand, it is the primordial desire that underlies all of his specific desires. He needs help to *realize* (make real) this beloved goodness in himself, for alone he is doomed to confusion. It is for this reason that God provided a *revelation*, bequeathing to humanity the spiritual truth needed to learn to recognize the good more clearly, and to realize it more fully, hence the 'salvation' offered by the religions, and the traditional view of the clergy as *official custodians of the revelation*.

This anthropology, which is taken for granted by most Christians, explains why they can understand and deal with evil more effectively than our humanists. The humanists, for their part, have inherited a *peace and social order* that Christendom established and are now in the process of dismantling it.

### *The warrior sacrifices himself both physically and morally.*

Having recapitulated the Christian notion of man's sinfulness, we are now able to address another problem with idealistic interpretations of moral action.

First, without complete honesty about oneself and about man in general, it will be impossible even to formulate the right questions about confronting evil via compulsion, much less provide the right

answers. We need to see everything we can see. If we are blind to man's fallen nature, we will miss a huge part of the picture and we will offer inadequate cures or else we'll offer cures for the wrong disease.

The greatest difficulty is this:

We cannot pose the question as if we were situated at a point of moral perfection, and as if we lived in a world that was likewise free of evil. If out of naivety or ideological blindness we begin as if we were in possession of perfect righteousness, then we make our primary struggle that of retaining this righteousness. If this were the case, then we would have to proceed by watching out for every possible imperfection that would degrade us in any way, and the only real path that would be open to us would be the path of pure and unadulterated righteousness.

If we approached things in that way, then clearly the use of physical force would be impossible to admit. This is because fighting and killing are always and everywhere *imperfect* in the sense that, in a perfect world, such things would never happen. In doing these things, even the hero suffers a kind of *moral loss*.

*We do not say that the warrior sins, but that he involves himself in actions that are, strictly speaking, not righteous and that a truly righteous being, such as Christ, would not even consider.*

This is why, in order to make sense of things, we must re-frame the issue and say that combat, for the *good man*, for the *hero*, takes on the aspect of a sacrifice of self, in the same way that Christ's descent from heaven into the domain of chaos was a self-sacrifice even before the historical moment of crucifixion. Merely permitting oneself to descend from perfection to imperfection is a self-immolation. It is precisely this kind of moral immolation that the warrior suffers.

The difference of course is that Christ descended from absolute perfection, and the human warrior never possessed such a state. The analogy is therefore imperfect, but it clarifies what is missing from the purely idealistic attempts to understand violence and war. It allows us to admit that there is no way to frame this issue wherein the warrior, even in service of the good, can claim moral purity and righteousness. He cannot claim it—but he can *reclaim* it, and this is why the rituals of spiritual purification provided by the religions are

of utmost importance to the warrior vocation. We will elaborate on this point below.

### *The example of the executioner.*

The warrior suffers, but other vocations suffer in a like manner. We could even say that his situation is not nearly so challenging as that of the traditional executioner, the 'headsman'.

There is a reason why executioners were always outcasts. Even in the tavern they were given a separate table with a goblet chained in place so that no one else could be touched by the moral contamination that followed this public servant wherever he went.

The humanists, of course, would describe this as the perverse prejudice of a self-contradicting legal system that used one man as a scapegoat to avoid the guilt of a brutal society. But based on what we've just explained, it should be understood that the executioner performs an action that is *unrighteous* but is at the same time *necessary* and so it is true that he suffers diminishment and distortion, hence the traditional stigma, but he is yet not a sinner and is not *spiritually* condemned for his service. In performing his function as the last terrible resort in the social resistance to evil, *he sacrifices himself even in terms of his social standing*.

### *The warrior does not possess righteousness.*

Returning to the vocation of the warrior, we can again cite Ivan Ilyin, who described his situation well:

> "Man is not righteous, and he does not fight evil either as a righteous man or among the righteous. Thinking of the origin of evil in itself, and fighting it in itself, and remaining apart from it while taking account of it to the end, man finds himself compelled to help others in their struggle to stop the activities of those who have already surrendered to evil and are seeking universal destruction. The one who carries out suppression himself stands in the marsh, but his foot rests on firm ground, and thus he helps others who are sucked down by the quagmire to come out onto the firm ground, trying to protect them and save them, and realizing that he himself can no longer come out dry from the marsh."[6]

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[6] Ivan Ilyin, *On Resistance to Evil by Force*, p. 165.

Like the executioner of old, the warrior takes up his sword and walks into the mire. He cannot but emerge covered in filth, if he emerges at all.

This is the absurdity of approaching the question as if we were like Christ, seated in heaven at the right hand of God, and it were a question of 'should we or should we not rise up and go down to fight alongside the fallen', for we are already there. The question must be posed in an entirely different way.

It is not just the warrior, although his case is more tragic. It is all of us. We are not righteous, but wish to pursue righteousness, and we cannot pursue it if we refuse to act in any way that *involves* us in unrighteousness, since we are already involved in it. Like the pilgrim in Dante, our road to paradise leads into the inferno.

Any thinker who ignores his personal unrighteousness, which he shares with all men, will also ignore the unrighteousness of the warrior and fail to understand that all human actions are doomed to a degree of imperfection, and so his 'moral' answers will rest on hypocrisy or naivety or both. And when he finally does glimpse the reality of the situation, he will become utterly frozen and useless as he searches for a 'righteous option' and finds nothing forthcoming, and anyone who looks to him for answers will likewise be stuck at a fork in the road that presents no guarantees.

### *The paralysis of the perfectionist.*

We must be careful, after all of that, and state clearly that we are not justifying a heretical consequentialism wherein evil means are fine if the end is good. We are not trying to offer such 'clean' solutions, for that is precisely what such formulations offer.

What we are trying so hard to illustrate is that an overly idealistic morality leads to a kind of *perfectionism* in practice and the most disastrous result of perfectionism is that it is debilitating.

Moral perfections, like all perfectionists, suffer from paralysis. They cannot move, cannot take a single step, cannot make a single decision, unless assured of its perfect righteousness. Since no such assurance is forthcoming, the perfectionist will tend to become willfully blind to the harsher realities of life. In the end, there is only one way they are enabled to act. They act by pretending (and believing) that they act perfectly. Thus, they become Pharisees. Or

else they do nothing at all, deadlocked in a futile search for the righteous option they will never find.

Such people might become pacifists but depending on temperament they might err in the opposite direction and try to over-sanctify the warrior vocation. These are the people who describe the military as the 'hand of god', which of course leads to an attitude of permissiveness and results in all sorts of heinous behaviors on the part of warrior types who think their actions are all-too-righteous.

This latter view is the flipside of pacifism, just as naïve. It is just another idealized and ridiculous picture of war, this time as a righteous and morally cleansed affair. In any case, the idealists lead everyone astray and pretend to offer a path of simplistic perfection that ignores the ugliness of human realities.

***Righteous killing is a fantasy.***

The path of action is an uphill struggle and only those who are both honest and strong are up to the task of facing its extremes. The warrior vocation involves resisting evil in such a way that only a minimum of violence is manifested to adequately defend the truth. The will to righteousness is never lost, the warrior never becomes a cynic, but remains a realist who understands that his childhood dreams of fighting through the bog and coming out clean on the other side are just storybook fantasies that can be excused in children but must be condemned in adults. "Being a saint in a dream is not the same as being a saint in practice."[7]

We could say that the warrior must possess a vision of purity and righteousness and that his will must be upright and oriented toward this vision, but that *the path of action* he must tread does not perfectly reconcile with that which he loves, and in a sense he must go where he does not wish to be and suffer loss, *all out of a desire for the good*, or to say it another way, *for the love of God*.

To kill the villain is an evil, but it is a lesser evil than to let him butcher the innocent. The warrior carries out the evil that is the execution of the villain, and takes upon himself the stain of that evil, and not out of some delusion that in doing so he remains pure.

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[7] Ivan Ilyin, *On Resistance to Evil by Force*, p. 166.

Rather, he permits himself to be debased out of love for God and for the innocent people he defends, and *because it is the only way*.

The warrior never desires evil, which in a way implies that he never really wishes to kill, or would certainly choose another way if it were possible. He kills because he loves the good and because it must be done in order to protect the good and because, by providence and aptitude, *he is in a position to accomplish this feat*. He accepts the sacrifice, and he suffers the loss. This is the true nobility of the warrior, that he imitates Christ not in his purity but in his suffering. The warrior takes upon himself the sin of human conflict.

***The humility of the fighter is what saves him.***

Perhaps what distinguishes the warrior of the idealists from the warrior *of reality* is that the latter has chosen humility over prideful delusion. He sees and admits the spiritual imperfection that comes with his condition, which he shares with all men but which he is called upon to demonstrate in the most pitiable way—through the killing of his fellow men. When confronted with such a *duty*—because for all men resistance to evil is a duty, and for the strongest it is a duty to resist in the extreme—he does not tremble or weep or rationalize his way out, but sets himself to the task in humility. He throws himself, life and limb, body and soul, at Gods feet, trusting His mercy will preserve him. No coward could understand this kind of faith.

At the risk of going too far, we will say that through spiritual clear-sightedness, through love of God, through love for neighbor, and through complete inner honesty, the moral weakness of what he is called to do becomes irrelevant in the same mysterious way that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son was morally nullified in the face of *necessity*, because all he knew in that moment was that it was commanded and that he must obey.

If a primary characteristic of the great warrior is humility, then a perverse pride in bloodshed is his greatest liability. It leads directly to every violent abuse that we have ever heard of, and is, in turn, used constantly as evidence against the whole vocation.

***War spiritually distorts everyone involved.***

War is an opportunity to surpass oneself and to become more than we would ever be if we stayed within the bounds of a comfortable existence.

Some men join the military to 'be all that they can be', and for some this promise holds true. But we can also see that resistance to evil by force is a treacherous path, and that everyone who walks this path suffers, including even the noble warrior, and that he suffers even when he is victorious. In fact we could say that he suffers more in his victory, since through death he would have received immediate purification but in victory he must live with the stain and find a way to cope with the inner distortions that follow from his actions.

It is obvious to any religious person that what we do in life changes who we are, that we are body *and* soul and we cannot do things with the body and pretend they do not change what we are morally and spiritually. To push, strike, cut, and kill are actions that affect more than just the arm that swings the sword. They involve the whole mind and free will of the one who fights. The consequences, for such a one, are vast and long-lasting.

This holds true for the judge, the policeman, and the soldier, when they each perform their function of forceful resistance. It is also true for society as a whole when war makes unusual demands on it physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

War sets us up for certain contradictions. Certain emotional responses that are good for man in general are destructive during combat. These *good things* must be suppressed either systematically through training, or individually by sheer willpower. And on the other hand, sentiments and habits that are very anti-social become desirable in the heat of battle and so they must be instilled, encouraged, and edified so that the soldier can perform his function with some success. A whole range of attitudes and impulses are encouraged during wartime that must afterward be extinguished, if they can be extinguished at all.

It is entirely understandable that a hardened veteran might experience a kind of excitement in killing, and that he might develop instincts that we would call 'bloodthirsty'. Provided this is kept within limits and does not offend justice, it is not wrong and is the only way that things can be. But what comes afterward? What does the 'bloodthirsty' warrior do with all of this when it is no longer needed, in the interim between confrontations?

Here is where the modern purely secular approach to war breaks down almost completely. Traditionally it was understood that the trauma of war is physical as well as spiritual. This trauma cannot,

therefore, be effectively healed without incorporating spiritual means. The modern military knows little of this, even if it does of course employ chaplains. This is partly because even modern religious thinking does not adequately grasp the nature of the *spiritual means* in question.

Traditionally, the solution was to situate the entire vocation of the warrior within a spiritual context, and to make his training and his mission and his return from the field a matter of spiritual preparation and then spiritual purification—and make no mistake, a purification is always needed regardless of the goodness of the cause. This is the whole meaning of the chivalric orders of the medieval period, wherein the line between monk and knight was blurred.

Modern man is horrified at the thought of waging any war in the name of God or for openly religious motives. He shies away from any religious preparation for war, and today's soldiers are sent out into the field *spiritually naked* or, in the best of cases, left to his own devices since, in the secular world, a man's spiritual life is his own private affair.

### *Moral heroism cannot be the norm.*

Any civilization that demands moral heroism *as a norm* is doomed to collapse from exhaustion. No person, and no community, has limitless reserves of moral courage. Moral heroism cannot be sustained perpetually and must always be an exception. Many people cannot even muster it in the exception.

This limitation, which is part of human nature, is often misunderstood in individualistic societies where morality is not thought to be a collective effort and is instead treated as if each person could and should pursue their moral perfection in isolation and without public interference. What happens then, inevitably, is that the social norms that traditionally regulated morality begin to lose their force (in the name of individualism) and certain forbidden behaviors propagate and flourish in the name of 'rights', 'freedom', and 'personality'. At this point, the few who wish to remain virtuous are in a sad position, because there is no such thing as a private moral life.

In the face of a society that practices vice as a collective norm, the individual who wishes to behave morally will find themselves in a

situation where each day requires an immense act of moral discipline. It is part of man's nature to be absorbed in the collective of which he is a part, and it is *unnatural* to have to reject what everyone else is doing. It is *inhumane*. Such a man will have to forcibly alienate himself from his neighbors, which is obviously not a normal, healthy social state. Quite the opposite. In other words, he will have to, each day, make a heroic moral effort to remain true to his conscience. *No one can do this perpetually*.

It is a horrible injustice to moral people to treat them as if it were up to them to go against the grain of a society that has no regard for moral behavior and prefers to let anything go. Modern people imagine that they exist in a context of near total freedom, where behaviors are mutually exclusive, but this has never been the case.

*Licentious communities persecute those who do not wish to degrade themselves by forcing them to live out an anti-social lifestyle, deprived of the essential goods of community life.*

We see the same difficulty during wartime, both for the soldier and society at large. The sacrifices and the forms of discipline that a soldier endures during war are so extreme that they require a *heroic* level of effort to emerge spiritually intact. Likewise, in the face of fear and hate, any society that participates in war must also muster a moral energy that approaches the heroic in order not to lose itself to the negative passions that flare up. Such states should never be prolonged.

This is one of the primary reasons that perpetual military action is morally destructive not only to the members of the military but to civilization in general. It permits an exceptional experience (from which we can theoretically recover) to become the rule of daily life. Exceptional situations can demand exceptional responses, and we can often endure them, but we cannot expect exceptional responses every day, forever.

War that never ends, and a ceaseless *propaganda* of war, to which all modern societies are subject thanks to technology, is corrosive to all that is healthy and normal.

### *Military service is not a direct road to heroism.*

To those who seem to place military service on a kind of pedestal, such that anyone who enlists is granted something like secular

sainthood, it would be good to make the observation that although military service offers an opportunity for heroism and therefore spiritual realization, it is one of the most indirect and hazardous paths to that destination.

To become good, the normal means is to flee from evil. That is undeniable and ought to be the normal way of pursuing virtue and goodness. The soldier does the opposite. His challenge is to find a way to become good while running toward evil and entering into a reciprocal relationship with it and even sacrificing himself to its power. Do we really need to emphasize the problems that come from making light of this path, encouraging all young men to see it as a sure title to virtue and public respect? Chosen lightly or for the wrong reasons (for example, social clout or college tuition) it creates a class, not of heroes, but of mercenaries, and that is an entirely different thing.

### *The perks of military service.*

One of the biggest distortions that the warrior vocation has undergone in modern times is its transformation into a form of indentured servitude for the purpose of future economic benefit, with the payoffs being free education, medical care, and perhaps an immediate monetary payoff just for signing up.

We have already mentioned the distinction between combat as a spiritually perilous duty, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the career of the 'mercenary' who is basically a body for hire and may or may not have any concern for love and spiritual realization.

Economic bribes aside, there is the additional problem of young men being lured into military service due to the social status it accrues. Membership in the military in the United States automatically translates to strangers going out of their way to offer praises and thanks, and this has become so normal that it is almost a *faux pas* to omit it. No distinction is made between veterans of actual battles and those who may spend one weekend per month out in the field doing routine drills half an hour from home. It is not so much a problem of undeserved merit but of pseudo-religious patriotic zeal on the part of the public, which in America has taken on disturbing proportions. Not to genuflect in front of 'men in uniform' is tantamount to spitting on the flag.

We do not object to practice of showing respect to respectable men, and there are plenty of cases where soldiers deserve the respect they are shown, but we would like to point out that this automatic and indiscriminate form of soldier-worship ends up perverting military service into a kind of purchased flattery for egotistical young men.

In view of this combination of monetary reward and immediately elevated social status, it is difficult to imagine recruiters having to put forth much effort at all. One wonders why they are even needed. The answer to this last question is of course that *there is no such thing as enough soldiers* in an age when warfare has become *total*. No matter how many sign up, more will be needed, and once the willing are enlisted, the rest must be baited.

If we speak with hostility about these practices, it is because they tend to overshadow all the essential considerations, all the factors that *must be discerned* in order to know that military service is in truly one's vocation and that it will not turn out, on the contrary, to be a soul-destroying experience for a given individual. We would perhaps be more accepting if the spiritual questions were more seriously addressed as part of the 'marketing' strategy used by the state to increase its ranks, but instead it is ignored completely, and this cannot be condoned and renders all other tactics perverse.

### *The problem of the idealization of the military.*

The problems just mentioned are partly the result of painting too romantic and idealized a picture of the military vocation.

In some cases, this has been the work of the pacifists themselves who always go too far and say too much in their protests. One example of this heartless pacifism was the treatment of soldiers returning from Vietnam. To welcome a soldier home by spitting in his face is not exactly in line with justice and says nothing to him that would dispose him to hear your concerns. Nor is it even reasonable considering the fact that soldiers do not decide when and where they fight, and so to blame them for an unjust war is to completely misunderstand the order of things. All the important decisions were already made before the soldiers arrived at boot camp, and those decisions were not made by the soldiers themselves. But that is another subject, which will be addressed if time permits.

For now, we only wish to say that those who are more sympathetic to the situation of the soldier, and who also sense the *duty* of those with power to resist evil, naturally respond to the cruelty of the pacifists by running to the opposite extreme and elevating all veterans to a kind of special social class entitled to unqualified adoration.

This idealization, which is a confused response to a noble intuition, is made more confusing when we see that the supporters, much like the protestors, do not understand the difference between those who fight the wars and those who determine which wars ought to be fought. Not only do they demand respect for soldiers who fight (this much would be reasonable) but, without knowing they have changed subjects, they also demand respect for the government officials who decide what wars can justly be fought.

Through the conservative slogans about 'supporting our military', they lump all those soft bureaucrats into the fold with the actual soldiers and demand that neither of them be criticized or questioned in any way. In this way, respect for soldiers is converted into a bootlicking servility to government authority, which creates an inability to question the government as a political organization. It is impossible for these military-worshippers to understand that a person might respect soldiers and at the same time question whether or not the politicians who control them have their best interests in mind, and that on this basis it is entirely possible to object to military intervention *on behalf of the soldiers themselves and out of respect for their dignity*. But no, we find that the 'pro-military' crowd indirectly becomes the 'pro-government' crowd, and a deceitful politician gains protection under this umbrella of patriotic zeal.

### *Anything less than perfect is distasteful.*

It is natural to wish to be faultless, and to try and find perfection in our acts. It is natural to be disturbed at the presence of ambiguity in our motives. This is true especially for the weak-willed, since they more than others must have assurances that their acts are 'safe' and that there is no risk involved. If they saw the truth about their mixed motives, then they would not be able to bring themselves to act at all. *It takes great courage to act in spite of doubt and without any assurances that the decision we made was the right one*.

This is true also of collective actions. A nation wants to believe that its military interventions are acts of unquestionable heroism and goodwill. We strive to imagine our country as the noble savior coming to the aid of the weak and persecuted. Our national motives must be pure, and the means honorable. To question this narrative, and to wonder if perhaps our motives are sometimes mixed and our means a bit too pragmatic, is to be *unpatriotic*.

As individuals or as a collectivity, we yearn to be blameless so that we do not have to question our moral uprightness.

This is why conflicts, whether political or military, tend to be presented as matters of black and white, Christ vs. anti-Christ. The enemy must be 'all wrong' because if they were 'partly right' then this would have implications. We cannot admit any good in the enemy, no legitimacy can be granted to their complaints. If that were the case, then they would have a certain share in heroism and this could mean that we have a certain share in unrighteousness, and although this is always and everywhere the case to some degree, we cannot admit it consciously or else we would not be able to bring the full force of our wills to the task.

The mark of the truly courageous and strong-willed man is that he can act even in the face of his own personal unrighteousness, in the face of a real *antagonism* between the God he serves and the imperfect way he serves him. He is able to fight while admitting that his opponent has some good in him, and that he must in some way respect his enemy. He can fight with all his will, allowing all the while that, yes, he too is a sinner.

# THE SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE

♦♦♦

***The immediately feasible or the impossible perfect.***

It boils down to the necessity of making a choice and taking a stand once it becomes clear that the perfect is not an option and that in most cases we find ourselves scrambling to salvage the least imperfect outcome. This is why spiritual sightedness and honesty are so important for the warrior, the statesman, or anyone who must take decisive action when confronted with so many unpleasant and potentially *unrighteous* choices.

The priest or the academic, for all their lofty achievements, do not really have to face this mess. The monk can turn the other cheek because in the end he is absolved of responsibility to anyone but God, and we can assume that this is pleasing to God. But the same is not true of the policeman, the soldier, and the parent. To these, God has entrusted the care of a whole society, city, or household, and when confronted with a violent evil, to turn the other cheek out of some lofty sentiment would be to betray their vocation. The monk sacrifices himself when he turns the other cheek; the father would sacrifice his whole family. The two situations are not comparable and to apply the same moral calculus to each is both cruel and superficial.

The skill that must be developed in the man who resists evil by force is not a willingness to endure evil, but rather the ability to discern between the *unachievable ideal* and the *immediately salvageable good*. This is not the same as turning to the lesser evil out of laziness or moral indifference: it is a matter of acting in a context of imperfection.

What the warrior must find in every situation is the *actual best*, as opposed to the *abstract best*. Being called to action, he realizes the good *here and now* and not according to a theoretical formula, and therefore the good he actualizes through his choices will always be a *relative good*.

***Justice and morality are not coextensive.***

When it is said in the Gospel of Matthew that the Father 'maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just

and on the unjust', we are given an excellent starting point for a necessary observation about the distinction between morality and justice.

Sometimes acts of God, which must be *good*, and therefore *moral*, are also, from the point of view of human legal calculus, *unjust*. It is worth repeating: God's morality is *unjust*, but in the sense that his *love* exceeds justice and consumes it.

Examples of this holy disregard for justice abound. It is shown to the prodigal son, and in the parable of the workers who were paid a full day's wage for a partial day's work. The other workers (like the obedient son in the first parable) were *justly* irritated at the master's decision. Here we can see the discrepancy, the master departs from the logic of justice but never from the essence of the *good*.

What we are trying to show is, firstly, that *justice does not provide an exhaustive account of the moral life*, and in the same way that a truly *good* act can offend legal justice, so also can legal justice offend the *good*.

To reframe this concept in the context of war and the warrior, we can say that the vocation of the warrior is the vocation of *justice*. The actions of the *just warrior* can still be described as *morally imperfect*, since as we have observed, justice does not encompass the entirety of the good. In using force to harm or kill an enemy, the warrior offends *perfect righteousness,* but he conforms to *justice*.

Here is the principle that must be grasped:

For the warrior, *justice* is enough, and in humility he acts knowing that according to his earthly duties he must settle for something *less than moral*. His duty represents the inverse of God's mercy, and he trusts God's mercy to exceed his justice and cover its imperfection.

The warrior lives in the cold shadow of the gratuitous love of the Father. It is not given to him to bask in the warmth of the sun that does not distinguish between good and evil men. The warrior must distinguish, sometimes with brutal finality.

In this light, are his actions *good*? Yes and no. The justice brought by the sword is superior to the injustice brought by the villain, but in relation to the moral perfection of divine mercy, this justice is inferior. We can see, then, that the man of action occupies the

position of justice, and this is an intermediate position between evil and righteousness.

Having said all of this, do we imply that the warrior who carries out his work through love of God is accounted sinful in the sense that, in resisting evil, he participates in it? The answer is not simple. Although every sin can be called unrighteous, not every unrighteous act is a sin. Sin can be seen as a particular category of unrighteous deeds, leaving open the possibility of *unrighteous actions that are not sinful*. The deciding factor in this question is *necessity*.

If the objective conditions of the situation allow for the possibility of a truly righteous, morally perfect action, and we opt for an unrighteous action, then we may speak of *sin*. However, if conditions exclude all righteous outcomes, and in pursuing the good we fall short of righteousness *out of necessity and without any other possible option*, then this cannot be a sin, since we are not held accountable for unrighteousness when the limits of our worldly situation exclude righteousness.

This is important, and when we speak of the *spiritual compromise* demanded by the warrior vocation, it is this difficult situation we have in mind. It is necessary to deny the false equivalence that presents *unrighteousness* and *sinfulness* as synonyms.

### *The spiritual compromise.*

The situation of the man who takes up the sword is this:

He turns to the use of force as a last resort and therefore as a necessity, and this last resort is morally imperfect. In doing this, he does not *sin*, since although the use of force is morally imperfect, and therefore unrighteous, he has no other choice, given the circumstances, unless of course he were to give up resistance to evil and surrender to it, which is not an option because this would carry him even further from moral perfection.

Here we must address the *subjective condition* of the man who resists evil in this way, out of necessity. The noble man does not choose this course out of a weakness of character, which is to say, from *subjective unrighteousness*, but due to an objective situation that only permits certain imperfect and undesirable outcomes. From among these outcomes, he salvages whatever good he can salvage, choosing the outcome which is least unrighteous, which at

this point becomes *mandatory* for him due to his vocation, accepting that in any case he will suffer loss. This is the *spiritual compromise* he is called to make.

If a righteous outcome were objectively possible, and if he did not choose it due to cowardice or indifference or some subjective weakness, only then would he be *culpable* for the moral imperfection in which he is involved.

### *The spiritual compromise is inherent in the human experience.*

It may sound as if we are painting an unfortunate picture of the warrior vocation, since we have said that it involves a necessary spiritual compromise. However, it may help things if we point out that this 'necessary spiritual compromise' is not at all specific to the warrior vocation but only takes on special significance in that context.

Anyone who must live 'in the world' and perform actions of any kind is constantly confronted with the necessity of this 'compromise', only to a somewhat lesser degree and with more mundane consequences. We have merely been describing a 'compromise' that is an aspect of daily life and, in the case of the sword, taken to its extreme.

As we have already said, anyone who insists on perfection will be frozen and useless and will be left at the mercy of circumstances. Likewise, the warrior who insists on perfection before acting will be left at the mercy of his enemies. We do not call for an abandoning of moral principles, but rather the honest admission of certain unpleasant facts about the moral life, first and foremost being that perfect conformity is not achievable while we live.

### *The doctrine of the fall and ritual absolution.*

Perhaps it is helpful to recall at this point that the doctrine of the Fall presupposes a state of imperfection in all men. If we use this as our starting point, all that we have said makes more sense.

It is, again, not so much that the warrior is somehow more unfortunate than others simply by vocation, but that the vicissitudes of his vocation amplify the spiritual dangers that are, at any rate, already present to all people everywhere. War subjects the soul to trials that are unknown under normal circumstances and puts men

through a trial by fire. While the glory is therefore amplified for the one who prevails, the flipside is that the danger of spiritual collapse is amplified as well.

To situate this within the Catholic context, we could point out that the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which provides absolution from sin, is part of the normal spiritual life of all believers, even the saints. Out of all the possible vocations, we would suggest that Reconciliation is most crucial for the warrior, due to his direct contact with evil in its most extreme manifestations.

Does this make the warrior 'unclean', either morally or spiritually? Of course not, for as we have said, the saints themselves were often known to frequent the confessional as often or more often than the weakest of sinners. Priests themselves have their own confessors, and they avoid the confessional at their own risk. To need confession is not to be weak.

The state of sin is a basic condition for man, and it is not a special insult to point out that certain vocations require *constant spiritual maintenance* in order to continuously repel the assault of evil. The greater the struggle, the more it is always considered necessary to return frequently to the refuge of spiritual purification and light.

### *The monk also makes the spiritual compromise.*

If it still sounds as if we've made the warrior vocation a sorry one, insisting repeatedly that it involves a willful departure from certain aspects of righteousness, we could say that the same compromise is made by the cloistered monk in every age. The only difference is that Christianity has taken pains to provide elaborate justifications for why the compromise of the monk actually constitutes a benevolent sacrifice and not a sin. But it remains a 'spiritual compromise' in the sense we have explained.

Consider the fact that, if the life of Christ is again presented as exemplary and if we take the Gospel teaching as a 'norm', we can say that the lifestyle of the desert fathers involved an obvious departure from the normal Christian vocation of *involvement* with the world. The hermit always ignores some important components of Gospel teaching or at least *ignores their full development*.

The discipline of celibacy, for example, and the obligation to perpetuate humanity through marriage and family life, which are

not spiritual opportunities but obligations under normal circumstances, do not apply to the priest or the hermit. The cloistered life seems to ignore certain aspects of Christian life, or perhaps it does not so much ignore them as it re-presents them in an exceptional way.

In other words, the ascetic vocation compromises so that it can rise above the norm and present for it a kind of exception, on the grounds that even if it is exceptional in a limited way, the good it achieves thereby actually far exceeds whatever loss is suffered by the compromise. What the monk does not experience through sexual relations and family life (which, among other things, constitute his *sacrifice*) he makes up for in a kind of spiritual realization, one that benefits all of humanity indirectly.

The monk in the desert ignores the call to actively and *directly* serve his fellow man. He disdains participation in political activities. He avoids responsibilities to family and friends. He replaces these things, in some cases, with a more condensed form of community life amongst other ascetics, but this is not a thorough replacement for life in the world and it is *naïve* to pretend that a monk among monks is shouldering the same kind of burden that a citizen among citizens must shoulder as he makes his way in society. Yes, monks have involved themselves in affairs of state and been influential, but again it is naïve to act as if this proves that they effectively function in that capacity, and anecdotes about saints influencing heads of state are memorable mostly because they are so anomalous.

To present the hierarchy of brothers as presenting challenges identical to the hierarchy of parents and children is again absurd. Whoever speaks as if interactions with peers in an isolated and controlled atmosphere are just as challenging to moral discipline as the raising of children—a task of such spiritual magnitude—is to speak as someone who has been too long removed from the activities of the world and has become ignorant of what it entails.

We are not at all trying to degrade the life of the ascetic, and we do in fact grant to it all the esteem it has been shown throughout the ages. Nonetheless, it is harmful to ignore the fact that it involves a *compromise* for the sake of an extreme: the ascetic life, the spiritual development that it supports, and the 'perfume of the sacred' that emanates from the monastery and makes present in civilization a locus of spiritual realization, is *worth whatever its members may forgo of the normal life of the Christian.*

We can conclude by saying simply that what we provide in these pages is a justification for the warrior vocation that corresponds to the justification carefully provided by Christianity for the ascetic vocation of the monastery. What Christianity has developed for that form of *compromise* is what we are offering in a different context, not because Christianity has never offered it, but because the former has been retained to the present day, while the latter has been forgotten and is not readily available.

The vocation of the warrior and the vocation of the monk, therefore, are analogous in being exceptional and although they represent opposite extremes, we can say that if they appear to ignore certain things, it is due to the special nature of the vocation. They each suffer loss, they each make a sacrifice of themselves, they each do so for the benefit of mankind and out of love for God.

### *The danger of absolute justifications for the use of force.*

As we might expect, well-meaning pastors are sometimes tempted to ease the conscience of the warrior by providing easy justifications for the terrible work that must be done. Usually this justification is formulated in such a way that it relieves the warrior of any responsibility for his actions, offering him the false assurance that he can emerge from this bloody trial as white as snow. This was the approach of Martin Luther, as one notable example, but Catholics as well are not immune to the impulse, and we find similar attempts in the writings of the Jesuits. We can summarize their rationale as follows:

Government authority was instituted by God and has its justification for exercising its power. Since the exercise of this power has always and everywhere involved the use of the sword, then it is not the human actor who is morally responsible for the bloodshed, but God Himself, via government authority. In this way the responsibility for the havoc is at the feet of God, and although the sword is in the hands of the soldier (or the policeman or the executioner), it is truly the *hand of God* that does the work. Man in this case is merely the *instrument* of God's justice.

This is all very clean and pleasing but it must be rejected for several reasons. First and foremost, it degrades the soldier by robbing him of his moral participation in his own vocation. If it is really the hand of God, then the soldier himself is neither good nor evil but is a dehumanized vehicle for divine action. Second, it blurs the line

between the imperfect human order and the perfection of the divine, offering a promise of moral perfection on a plane where such a state is not possible. Third, it hides the fact that the execution of the work is done by a flawed human being, and presents it as the direct work of God, and since the work of God is always perfect and blameless, certain actions that should never be construed as perfect are whitewashed. That is to say, the imperfect human actors smuggle in evil under the umbrella of the divine prerogative. This is when we find inhuman and immoral means deployed in war, for example the dismissive attitude toward collateral damage, or the use of torture against prisoners. All of these cease to be 'lesser evils' and become an expression of God's pure will, purely realized on the temporal plane.

In their efforts to 'reassure' the soldier, and to reinforce a conscience that might otherwise be doubtful and hesitant, such teachers do great violence to their students. These reassurances eliminate the need, not only for a serious spiritual preparation for the work, but for spiritual cleansing after the fact. Why would anyone need inner healing after an act that was merely the will of God? It also encourages just the kind of naivety that we've been arguing against. Once these assurances are made it becomes far more difficult to stop short at the minimum necessary force and to understand that even the warrior for good suffers the more damage he must do to the villain. The moral ambiguity of the thing disappears, and what perhaps *should have caused hesitation* now proceeds unquestioned and even glorified.

Again, when we come to the writings of certain Jesuits we find that, on the basis of certain Old Testaments scriptures, it is apparently permissible to commit acts of wanton unrighteousness by order of God. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, and the wars fought by the Hebrews in order to establish themselves in the promised land, all of these are interpreted in such a way that suggests we should not really consider righteousness at all once we are convinced that we are acting on good authority, since in a convoluted way all authority is from God.

The problem here is that these explanations not only pave the way for heinous violence and harsh punishments (since we 'the righteous' suffer nothing by dealing them out, we deal them out freely), but they also commit a dual injustice by (1) distorting the image of God and (2) relieving men of the need to answer for their own unrighteousness.

It is far more realistic, honest, and spiritually healthy to take up the sword with the understanding that what we are about to do is not 'sanctified violence' but is rather a *mandatory work of unrighteousness* and that we are not saved from the consequences of this work simply because we are delegates of the divine will.

***The sword is a duty, not a prerogative.***

Perhaps another way of showing the evil of the above solutions is to say that the use of the sword is never *permitted* but rather *necessitated*. The difference is that if we identify ourselves with God and our acts are His, then my work is construed as a *privilege* or even a *right*, and becomes something very open-ended as if it were a *power* bequeathed to me for my use. Instead we must see this work as *mandatory* in certain situations where no other path is available, and so it becomes not a *right* but a *duty*, not a *power* bestowed to me but a *burden that I must shoulder*. And it is a very heavy one.

***Those who live by the sword die by the sword.***

It will probably strike some as objectionable that we seem to be degrading those who take up the sword by calling what they do a kind of *mandatory unrighteousness*, but it should be remembered that we also said that it is no sin, precisely because it presents itself as a *spiritual imperative*. Not to resist in precisely this imperfect manner is to betray one's responsibility to the good, nor can one hold out for a clean solution. The only chance of an ideal and perfect outcome is to hope that God will wipe the cosmic slate clean before we have to strike, that some other force will intervene on our behalf and do this unpleasant task for us. In other words, to demand an unambiguous solution is to either stall or to be enlisted in the work of evil by allowing its expression through evil deeds and to the detriment of the villain and everyone else.

In a certain sense we can say that the choice, for the man who insists on perfect righteousness, is this:

Betray God's cause and his own vocation in favor of 'righteousness' or, on the other hand, confidently and clearly perceiving that evil threatens and no righteous outcome is possible, to remain faithful to his vocation, and to resist by taking a path that is unrighteous because imperfect and undesirable.

The warrior is called to selflessness, to acceptance of sacrifice, to humility, to suffering. On this basis the warrior, the vocation of the

sword, is given special honor. People in every age have sensed this and acted accordingly, until times of decadence when spiritual disease rendered the vocation perverse, because in the absence of spiritual sightedness, this vocation cannot maintain the careful balance of sincere pursuit of the good and humble acceptance of the imperfect.

The fate of the warrior is to confront uninvited evil and to be wounded by it, and to some degree he surrenders any ideal happiness that he might have dreamed about and pursued and instead sets himself to the accomplishment of feats other men cannot imagine and could not endure.

The tragic dilemma of this vocation is that the warrior is right even if unrighteous, good even when immersed in evil. *He shoulders the burden of killing but at the same time the burden of being killed.* It is perhaps not without reason that the medieval sword was often in the shape of the cross, since to take up the sword is, in a certain sense, to agree to be crucified upon it.

***To hide from the sword is to invite evil.***

Those weak-willed leaders who deny the function of the sword delude themselves by thinking that they can avoid this problem by hiding from it. The same goes for movements that would remove this vocation from society.

Evil wields the sword and when those who organize themselves in favor of God and goodness refuse to allow also for the presence of the sword, they exclude the strongest from among them, or at least render them useless by robbing them of their function. This is not courage, it is ignorance and naivety. The exclusion of the strong-willed and the clear-seeing from such movements creates an imbalance and perpetuates weakness. Those who will not face the harsh realities of resistance to evil ensure that they will be ruled by the weakest among them, who will often wind up promoting and enabling a different kind of violence in their turn.

They think they are choosing the high road by refusing the necessary compromise, but it is a timeless fact that always and everywhere the *best* are called to fight and to sacrifice for those who will not and who tremble at the call. And just because these individuals fight by means that are *not the best*, it does not follow that they are not still the most noble.

Only the strong can endure this pseudo-participation in unrighteousness without being overrun by it, infected by it, and finally conquered by it. Only the bravest who at the same time know the good and love it, can take the spiritual blow and recover from it.

The monk and the scholar have the advantage of carrying out their good work and serving the good with clean hands; the warrior must serve the good with hands stained with blood, not because he is bloodthirsty, but because there is no way around it.

***Only the strong.***

The vocation of the warrior shares a danger similar to the possession of great wealth. It is not a sin *in itself* to possess a massive fortune, but wealth is rightly termed an *occasion of sin* by the Catholic Church because it presents certain dangers and easily distorts the soul of anyone exposed to it.

The vocation of the sword carries a similar danger, as an *occasion of sin*.[8] To be presented with the duty to expose oneself to such risk, to the vicissitudes of combat, to the split-second decisions where life hangs in the balance and is extinguished in a moment, is to be exposed to a thousand *necessary* occasions of sin. The potential for so many crucial *moral errors* is far more immediate and graver than what might afflict the millionaire with his money. An abundance of economic power is one thing: an abundance of military power is something else.

For this reason, we can say again that only the strong should take up the sword, and by strong we do not mean the reckless, the wanton, the violent. We do not mean those with a will to violence or an excess of testosterone. We do not have in mind the man that the film industry and popular culture present to us as the manliest. We intend something very precise. By *strong* we mean the one in whom the conscience is both *well-formed* and *powerfully operative*, and this latter depends on *strength of will*. The strong warrior remains safe from spiritual peril by resting with confidence in the health of his conscience, and he can only rest in this after undergoing rigorous spiritual formation.

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[8] 'Occasions of sin' are described in moral handbooks as external circumstances (persons, places, or things) that temp one to sin. They can be proximate or remote, necessary or free, present or absent.

It is said that power corrupts but this is not true. It is rather that power is magnetic to the corruptible and draws them to itself. Great wealth attracts the *corruptible*. Likewise, the warrior vocation is susceptible to being degraded by the degenerate man, the weak man, who cannot endure the demands of the compromise and in the face of necessary unrighteousness grants himself liberties, who goes *further than necessity demands*, who perhaps vents his rage or lets his impulses run too free. Such are the behaviors of those who are not up to the demands of the spiritual compromise. The strong come out wounded but spiritually intact and they recover through cleansing, which we will describe below. But the weak are not so lucky; they may not recover at all and even when they survive *physically,* they are mortally wounded internally.

***The conscience is not deadened but sharpened.***

In a situation of moral ambiguity, how does the conscience speak? And in the situation of the warrior, how does he listen? Given the complexity of his situation, is he to ignore the voice of conscience, to numb it in some way so that its voice is not heard in the moment, and so that he cannot hear the inner call to perfection?

On the contrary, it is all the more necessary that the conscience, in these individuals, be strengthened and that it speak with utmost clarity, since in these desperate hours the conscience speaks *through* the chaos and *over* the noise of the battle and *in spite of* the ambiguity of the context.

By walking the treacherous path between *mandatory imperfection* and *avoidable violence* the warrior, like the king or judge or policeman, blazes a new path each day. There is no set of easy precepts written down for him indicating exactly how he can cope with each situation he faces.

Theorists and critics tend to speak from the point of view of theory and pronounce on the 'excessive use of force' seen on television, where a police officer shot and killed a person who in hindsight might not have actually been a threat. This is a sad situation and everything possible must be done to prevent it, but the problem in the criticism is that the critics are speaking in hindsight, and from the point of view of mental reflection. They speak from the perspective of ideas, where things can be paused and replayed, but the police officer is immersed in *time*, where things *happen* in quick succession and there is no getting out of the way. Here things are

not neatly divided into a clean sequence of events, but rather time proceeds without regard for the limits of human comprehension, and *things happen too fast*. It is a denial of the limits of the human condition to condemn men for not being omniscient.

Of course, we must admit that if there is a lack of preparation or an emotional imbalance in the individual (and this certainly must be common) then the critics are justified in calling for greater care in what kind of person is placed in these situations. But it would be easier to accept this criticism if the critics acknowledged the hard truth that when the situation deteriorates to the point that force is necessary, there is no desirable outcome. Too often the politicians and reporters pretend that a perfect outcome could and should have been realized, no matter how impossible the scenario. They do this as a way of catering to the mobs they must entertain, and the hero is often sacrificed in true Christian form to the exigencies of spiritual combat. It is a performance that repeats itself in history.

We use these observations not to lighten the load placed on the shoulders of the warrior, but to highlight the gravity of things and also the necessity of a very thorough spiritual education, which is the only thing that can endow a person with a *sense for justice* and an *instinct for appropriate limit*s so that when the moment comes, he is able to be decisive and forceful, but restrained, and without losing himself to the terror of the moment.

The warrior walks on shifting sands where each situation must be judged on the fly, and where he cannot afford to stop, regain his balance, and patiently contemplate an appropriate response. He cannot rely on reflection and mental processes to determine his course of action, but only on 'training' and too often his training is purely technical.

### *Legitimate departures from moral perfection.*

We've repeatedly pointed out the compromise that must be made when confronting evil, but it will probably help to point out some instances where this might occur. Take for example the situation of the spy working to infiltrate an enemy organization for the sake of learning their secrets. If this kind of work is legitimate at all it must involve numerous acts that would be called immoral in any other context: lying, betrayal, manipulation, theft, every kind of deceit up to and including the taking of life.

These things are necessary in the confrontation between man and evil and although they are certainly unrighteous (we cannot imagine Christ using sabotage and intrigue to overcome the Pharisees) they are precisely the sort of *mandatory departures* we have in mind but played out on a larger scale and in a context that makes them easy to see.

The situation of the spy is also indicative of the kind of 'fine line' that must be walked and the danger that hounds anyone who must use these means. It is easy to go too far. What happens when leaders who rightly develop counterintelligence techniques retain them and, in addition to deploying them out of necessity against enemies, they use them *domestically*, spying on their own citizens and using the same kind of intrigue and betrayal against their own people?

Here, in a clearly visible way, we see the danger of corruption in men who do not have the spiritual sight or strength of will to know that although we must enter the swamp to save those trapped there, we cannot bring the swamp home with us.

Here, then, we can perhaps move to the necessity of spiritual cleansing, which involves a kind of decontamination after our immersion in combat with evil.

### *The necessary spiritual cleansing.*

We have established that to be *adequate to the task* of wielding the sword, serious spiritual preparation is necessary. Now we can complete our picture by adding that, after returning from the battlefield, a spiritual cleansing is essential.

This should have been obvious from the start, but in a secularized age it is easily overlooked. How could a spiritually awakened soul hope to cope with the demands of this harsh vocation without recourse to the purification rituals facilitated by religion?

Just as religion was shown to be indispensable for the maintenance of a healthy warrior vocation, so that it does not become monstrous, so also religion is necessary for the ongoing recuperation and sanity of these men.

The very existence of evil draws us away from the contemplation of the divine. Merely by looking at it and seeing it for what it is, we become marked by it and even at this early stage we can feel the need for cleansing. People readily admit this when, after witnessing some

atrocity, they say that they 'feel dirty'. The problem is so much more extreme for the fighter who must interact with evil through force and physical contact. It is ridiculous to imagine that these inroads into hell do not tear us away from whatever spiritual harmony we might have enjoyed back at home. This harmony must be re-established at every chance. The warrior, after defending the temple, must enter into it and be cleansed.

Here is the key to true victory over evil. Here the warrior truly and *decisively* vanquishes his foe. We are not victorious when we repel evil by force; we are not victorious in the act of killing our enemies, no matter how necessary it might be. We are victorious when, after this contact with evil, and after the suffering of this departure from righteousness, we return and wash ourselves clean in the presence of the divine. It is only at that moment of *absolution* that the laurels are bestowed and only then is evil truly vanquished, since whatever 'transfer' it brought about by forcing us to enter into relationship with it is reversed and nullified.

It goes without saying that, since everyone experiences evil and resists it, everyone must make a habit of spiritual cleansing, and this is of course the whole reason for the Catholic sacrament of Reconciliation. For the warrior, this all takes on a special meaning.

Even for the brave and the most noble, even for the strongest among us, it is not possible to withstand these repeated excursions deep into enemy territory without becoming weakened by the trial and in some way tainted by it. If the warrior does not frequently return to the temple for purification, he risks forgetting where it is, and holy places may even become odious to him.

The purification following the shedding of blood removes incurred traces of corruption and is therefore the salvation of the warrior, and more pressing for him than for vocations not subject to such tests of spiritual endurance. For the one who has faced death and dealt death to other men on any scale, it is spiritually risky in the highest degree to ignore the cleansing rites of religion.

### *We must be very careful adapting traditional teachings in the present.*

In spite of all that we've said, we must admit that the traditional wisdom presents war not so much as a *necessary evil* and more as an *opportunity* for the emergence of heroism and the refining of

oneself in favor of a superior character. Does this mean that we've taken up a position against tradition? Not hardly, although this requires some explanation.

First, it should always be understood that we are not addressing the same *human type* as that addressed by, for example, St. Bernard. Or, in the East, we could say that we do not have in mind, and could not possibly have in mind, the same intended audience as the *Bhagavad Gita*.

We address ourselves to the modern type, and to the traditional vocations insofar as they express themselves *in decayed and partial form* within the modern world. For this reason, we find that we cannot prescribe the same methods and attitudes as what might have been prescribed to the medieval crusader. To do so would be to completely ignore the drastic changes in conditions and in humanity that have taken place since then, which involved a disorientation of the human psyche.

It would be an abuse to tell the *soldier* of today that he should operate by precisely the same principles as what we find in the *Hagakure*, intended as it was for 17th century samurai.

This is a very important admission, and this is why we have hesitated even to mention any of the traditional attitudes prescribed for the warrior vocation, fearing the possibility that this fact might be overlooked. Modern men have been rendered modern and while the old ways can still be applied in a certain sense, they cannot be carved out of their ancient context and pasted into the modern one.

Having emphasized this point, we will proceed with caution and offer a few remarks on what, in a different world, were the opportunities for true spiritual development that the warrior vocation presented; and at the same time, when possible, we will provide adaptations that might help the man who finds himself called to this vocation in the modern world, where it exists only in a very degraded form, so that he can make the most of his situation.

### *Heroism as an opportunity for transcendence.*

We can summarize the *ascesis* of the traditional warrior vocation in a single term, or goal, which is *heroism*.

If the monk intends, through his own form of *ascesis*, to awaken the *saint* within himself, then the warrior, with his own form of *ascesis*, intends to awaken the inner *hero*.

If the monk's practices and procedures, in addition to the environment he seeks or constructs for himself, are all geared toward facilitating the awakening of this inner saint, we can say that the practices, mentality, and environment of military discipline and war present the warrior with a corresponding opportunity to cause the emergence of the inner hero.

Both of these approaches are examples of *asceticism*, although in the Christian world it is largely forgotten that there are varieties here in question and that the way of the saint is not the *only* valid path to spiritual realization. This has been much to the detriment of cultural development, but there are reasons for it.

Both of these approaches (each adjusted to serve a specific *spiritual type*) involve an emphasis on one's mortality and an acceptance of frailty and death as integral to the kind of spiritual sightedness that is desired, and as supportive of the emergence of the qualities that are needed.

Death is not contemplated for its own sake but as *the obstacle to be overcome*, in the sense that the practitioner reaches a point where he is able to face this great evil without wavering and without fear. For the saint, this culminates in death by martyrdom, as is well-known; for the soldier, this culminates in a heroic death on the battlefield. The parallels here should be obvious, and in both cases we can speak of *victory through death and over death*, which means that we are dealing with *transcendent victory* with a view toward immortality.

What is also brought into focus is the *relativity* of earthly life. Both the warrior and the priest are taught to be aware of how earthly life and all its temporal values are only meaningful in view of some greater end, beyond life.

We know from the traditional teachings of religion that it is not absolutely necessary to die a martyr in order to achieve this kind of transcendent victory, and that it is possible for the saint to live as a saint. Likewise, it is possible for the warrior to act heroically and be forever changed by the act without that act having to be his last. Yet

the extreme of death allows us to more easily demonstrate the convergence of the vocations.

### *Caste regression and the evolution of war.*

Having very briefly described the traditional ascesis of the warrior vocation, it will be good to show how this has been altered throughout history and why we have so emphatically stated that the situation today is not conducive to the *warrior ascesis*, and why it is, in fact, very dangerous to misinterpret the situation as we find it today.

To help clarify this, we will refer to what is called the regression of castes, which is a way of describing the collapse of traditional civilization and the emergence of the modern world. Although we've described this elsewhere, we will re-present it here from the point of view of the warrior vocation specifically.

In short, the regression of the castes is a process whereby the traditional order of civilization, consisting of four primary castes organized hierarchically according to nature and function, collapses from the top down.

The four principal castes are: 1) the priests, 2) the nobility (the warrior is situated here), 3) the merchants/tradesmen, and 4) the general laborers or 'peasants'.

In terms of function, the corresponding hierarchical breakdown is: 1) knowledge, 2) temporal power and war, 3) commerce or trade or production, 4) labor.

Again, we do not wish to repeat here the depth of analysis that is provided in other sections, but suffice it to say that this organization is in keeping with logic and the nature of the human condition, such that it permits society to achieve a kind of unity, since unity is only possible when differences of vocation are acknowledged.

In the latter part of the Dark Age, when the process of decay and inversion takes its toll, the structure begins to deteriorate through stages of *devolution*. First, the authority of the priestly caste is set aside, and the aristocracy absorbs its authority and usually its property, just as the European princes absorbed the land and authority of the Catholic Church after the Reformation. The aristocracy (which, again, would traditionally have also been the warrior caste) then operates without regard to the dictates of

religion or is no longer answerable to any religious authority. Since this is not a stable state, social entropy increases and eventually the 'Third Estate', in other words the merchants or middle class or 'bourgeoisie', realizes that it could disenfranchise the nobility, just as the nobility disenfranchised the Church, and so it does. This took place in the West under the guise of liberal Enlightenment philosophy, and entailed the establishment of democracy via the French and American revolutionary wars. Finally, since this third stage is in fact the most unstable, the fourth stage of regression comes quickly, and here the lowest elements, representing *labor*, aka: the proletariat, seek to overthrow the bourgeoisie, hence the barbarism of Marxist movements and Russian Bolshevism.

Now, having provided that brief outline, we wish to point out that at each stage of degeneration, war itself takes on new meaning and it is as if a whole new vision of anthropology is adopted. This has incredible import for the warrior vocation, which, in the 'normal' traditional structure, was primarily the responsibility of the aristocracy.

That war could ever be the responsibility of the wealthiest class is an idea that comes as a shock to us today, and this shows the distance between ourselves and the traditional norm. For us anyone and *everyone* is called to war, just as everyone is called to statecraft via modern elections.

When a hierarchy collapses, the functions of the higher do not simply disappear since they still must be performed. Responsibilities drop to the next level and are absorbed into the adjacent caste, even if the original caste is still allowed to exist in some manner. Thus, after the Reformation, the priests were allowed to remain, but at the same time they had no real social function because, in the new religious mentality, which was Protestantism, all men were construed as theologians with interpretive power and religious prerogatives, and obedience due to any member of a religious hierarchy was felt as an offense. The same became true after the aristocracy was overthrown: no man after that point feels he is rightly subjected to another's rule.

The important distinction, here, is that all that was said concerning the possibilities of the warrior vocation, its spiritual power, and the instructions pertaining to a warrior *ascesis*, originated in a context where the warrior vocation belonged to a minority social element. It was given to the nobility, a professional class of soldiers. This made

sense, since war itself was the responsibility of that minority, and because only that minority was in possession of great wealth and education in statecraft and was able to dedicate itself to the business of ruling and of war in a way that is no longer conceivable for us. It is almost unthinkable, today, to suggest that the fighting of wars is something that ought to fall to our leaders and their private entourages. And yet that was the historical norm.

To return to our point, we can see that alongside the stages of social decay, we are presented with varieties of meaning attached to war, corresponding to the new human type responsible for fighting.

If war is waged under the flag of Christendom, it takes on a certain meaning for those who fight in it. It has a *spiritual motive*. If war, in the second stage, is waged under the flag of temporal power—for example the banner of a prince, then it goes without saying that its motive becomes worldly, and we will already have difficulty speaking of a true *ascesis*. Nonetheless, these first two situations were always more or less present and so the ascesis was still accessible through an emphasis on *fides* with respect to one's superior.

The third stage—the ascendance of the bourgeoisie—is heralded by the establishment of democracies and the spread of industrial capitalist economies. Here we come to the most profound transformation in the meaning of war. Here we come to the point where the warrior vocation is robbed of most of its spiritual potential and the spiritual dangers involved in the vocation, which were always present, are amplified to an unimaginable degree due to the absence of any *neutralizing* spiritual framework.

Because in these societies mankind is viewed as *homogenous*, there is no reason to speak of a warrior vocation, or any kind of vocation, since any man could just as well be any other man. Here we find the nobility and any other traditional designation (knight, samurai, etc.) is replaced with the citizen and the citizen-soldier, and this soldier fights at the behest of politicians who themselves remain hundreds of miles from battle. As for motives, he fights for reasons that are mostly unknown to him and in the end, with few exceptions, are of an economic nature.

The new citizen-soldier is, from the point of view of his rulers, nothing but a unit of human *material*, a tangible resource to be *spent* on the battlefield: he is cannon fodder. The nation with the

largest reserve of this material *resource,* or that proves most willing to spend it without scruple, is the nation that wins. War becomes a question of the combined use of technological advance and human quantities.

In the last phase of degeneration, when the proletariat overthrows the bourgeoisie, the warrior vocation suffers little since there is little left of it to be destroyed. The main difference is seen in the attitude of the individual, the soldier, toward himself, toward the value he places on his own life and the loftiness of his vocation, and also in the attitude of the rulers toward the people they use to achieve victory. If we have anything positive to say about bourgeoisie war, it is that its ideals, as naïve as they are, tend to be more noble, and the individual is perceived as having some dignity beyond his use as a bullet sponge.

All of these stages involve rhetoric about the hero, about the nobility of war, but it will be obvious now that the significance behind the words is entirely different, as if proceeding from different worlds of meaning. This is why we stress so much the fact that it is dangerous to try and transplant whatever might have been said to the medieval crusader into whatever 'military intervention' or 'liberation' might be underway here in the 21st century. Not all worlds present the same vocational possibilities, and not all wars present the same spiritual opportunities.

### *The samurai and the Way beyond righteousness.*

Now that we have entered a discussion of the traditional teachings on the warrior, how does this align with what we've said about the distinction between what is just and what is good—and on the complex nature of righteousness?

Here we will cite an enlightening passage from a famous manual for samurai, the *Hagakure*:

> "To think that being righteous is the best one can do and to value righteousness exclusively will bring many mistakes. There is a Way beyond righteousness. This is very difficult to discover, but it is the highest wisdom. When things are seen from this

> standpoint, things like righteousness are rather shallow. If one does not understand this on his own, it cannot be known."[9]
>
> "...there is one transcending level, and this is the most excellent of all. This person is aware of the endlessness of entering deploy into a certain way and never thinks of himself as having finished. He truly knows his own insufficiencies and never in his whole life thinks that he has succeeded. He has no thoughts of pride but with self-abasement knows the Way to the end. It is said that Master Yagyu once remarked, 'I do not know the way to defeat others, but the way to defeat myself.' "[10]

This is similar to the Taoist saying:

> "When the Tao is forgotten, there is righteousness. When righteousness is forgotten, there is morality. When morality is forgotten, there is the law."[11]

This also allows us to understand the way that traditional writings on war seem to make light of death or even present it as if it were to be sought. We can see that there is a victory that is more important than death, since it is at any rate inevitable. Another passage from the *Hagakure* runs as follows:

> "A certain person was brought to shame because he did not take revenge. The way of revenge lies in simply forcing one's way into a place and being cut down. There is no shame in this. By thinking that you must complete the job you will run out of time. By considering things like how many men the enemy has, time piles up; in the end you will give up. No matter if the enemy has thousands of men, there is fulfillment in simply standing them off and being determined to cut them all down, starting from one end. You will finish the greater part of it.
>
> "Concerning the night assault of Lord Asano's ronin, the fact that they did not commit seppuku at the Sengakuji was an error, for there was a long delay between the time their lord was struck down and the time when they struck down the enemy. If Lord Kira had died of illness within that period, it would have been extremely regrettable. Because the men of the Kamigata area

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[9] *Hagakure*, 19.
[10] *Hagakure,* 20.
[11] *Tao Te Ching*, Ch. 38, trans. By J.H. McDonald.

have a very clever sort of wisdom, they do well at praiseworthy acts but cannot do things indiscriminately, as was done in the Nagasaki fight.

"Although all things are not to be judged in this manner, I mention it in the investigation of the Way of the Samurai. When the time comes, there is no moment for reasoning. And if you have not done your inquiring beforehand, there is most often shame. Reading books and listening to people's talk are for the purpose of prior resolution.

"Above all, the Way of the Samurai should be in being aware that you do not know what is going to happen next, and in querying every item day and night. Victory and defeat are matters of the temporary force of circumstances. The way of avoiding shame is different. It is simply in death.

"Even if it seems certain that you will lose, retaliate. Neither wisdom nor technique has a place in this. A real man does not think of victory or defeat. He plunges recklessly towards an irrational death. By doing this, you will awaken from your dreams."[12]

### *Holy War and the Crusades.*

Christianity has always held as axiomatic the saying *vita est militia super terram*, that 'life is a struggle on Earth.' For this it has often been condemned as pessimistic, and it is sometimes said that Christianity holds a dim view of man and of life as a 'vale of tears', etc. Of course, from our point of view, this is merely a statement of fact, and it would be dishonest to say otherwise, and this is why humanism is a fundamentally dishonest worldview.

But to return to the idea of life as struggle, we can now point out the fact that this struggle, for the spiritual man, has a dual aspect. In every act of resistance to external evil, man fights on two fronts, one spiritual, which is to say, against evil, and the other physical and temporal, against *this particular man*. Each act of resistance is what it is in the concrete, but it is also a specific battle on the universal front in the war between good and evil that continues throughout cosmic history and transcends time, place, and individual.

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[12] *Hagakure*, 25.

From this religious view of conflict, we come to the traditional distinction between the *lesser holy war* and the *Greater Holy War*. A famous statement of this comes from the Prophet Muhammad, who said upon returning from a military outing: "We return from the lesser jihad ('holy war') to the Greater Jihad." He continued by specifying that the lesser holy war was fought externally and was to defeat the external infidel, but that the Greater Holy War, the Greater Jihad, was against the *infidel within each of us*, who must always be kept at bay.

This notion is key to understanding the Crusades, since the Crusades are not 'typical' of traditional war, and it would be wrong to present them as 'normative' since they are rather exceptional in many respects, the first and foremost being the fact that they were so clearly based on a spiritual understanding of life and of war.

To leave one's home to go to the Holy Land and to fight the infidel was, in a sense, to leave the worldly plane altogether and to fight on a front that transcended politics and earthly concerns. There were, of course, political motives, and as we should expect, they were usually imperfect, but that does not change anything.

It is crucial to highlight this point: when historians analyze the Crusades solely from a materialistic or ideological point of view, as the result of racism, bigotry, wealth, political advantage, etc., they are not necessarily wrong, except that they are only described the most superficial aspects of the thing. They overlook its essence. In other words, what they say is true, but there are other things to be said about the phenomenon that are *more true* in the sense of providing a more complete or adequate explanation. This *more true* explanation is that the two sides both entered into a sacred space and fought a holy war that transcended worldly affairs, and therefore offered to its participants a different type of victory. Whether the holy land was reclaimed, and even whether they lived or died…these were all secondary concerns. The great opportunity was the mere *participation* in such a noble spiritual struggle.

We will add here that what we have said about 'motivation' holds true even if most of the participants were not consciously aware of it. It would be silly to expect such men to be able to enunciate with any clarity the nature of such an endeavor, but the collective spirit of the thing speaks for itself and 'does the thinking for them'.

In the Crusades, Jerusalem was truly a geographical point with genuine political significance, sought after for worldly advantages, but at the same time it held symbolic importance as the Kingdom of Heaven, and for both sides. The Crusades were both a spiritual pilgrimage and an earthly conflict in the same moment.

This is evident in the sermons preached to knights of that time, which promised them a 'celestial fief' as a reward (either in victory or heroic death), as opposed to the earthly fief that would have normally been the spoils of war.

What is interesting is that the Crusades are criticized as being the most absurd, excessive, and perversely motivated expression of the 'ignorance' of the Middle Ages, when in fact what we see is an exceptional instance of collective action and self-sacrifice for motives that are predominantly supra-human and supra-political. Naturally, this would appear insane to a secularized people.

***Only the lesser war remains.***

Referring again to the Prophet's distinction between the lesser and greater wars, we will say that in order to evaluate war as advantageous for spiritual development, it is essential for it to emphasize this teaching to the maximum extent. If we claim that modern warfare does not present the same opportunities for heroism as traditional war, it is primarily because only the *lesser war* is acknowledged.

We should pause here to say that fighting for *freedom* or *democracy* or *equality*, whatever the value these ideas may hold in practice, is not the same as fighting for *sacred purpose*. These values are pseudo-religious values that have risen to prominence (and could only have done so) in the absence of a religious climate, and they are not adequate replacements. None of them are transcendent and none can serve as a support for the *heroism* that we have in mind.

Any time the *spiritual* component is excluded from the affair, the Greater War, which is the only justification for seeking it out, no matter one's vocation, recedes further into the distance.

We do not wish to say, here or anywhere, that no contemporary soldier could utilize his circumstances or his vocation to realize the hero in himself, and that it is all for naught; we only wish to repeat our constant warning, which pertains to the dangers of the confused

nature of the modern worldview, and to be honest about the difficulties presented in the modern context. It is possible to pursue the greater holy war on one's own effort, but this is not desirable and is for the most part a serious handicap in practice.

### *The real enemy and the real victory.*

War at any point in history can present itself as a *spiritual opportunity,* because war places man in a situation of struggle in such a way that it draws into the open *the inner infidel*. This spiritual 'enemy' emerges and stands before us to test us in the extreme, and victory over this enemy is the true victory, since after all there will always be evil in the external world until the end of time and so we are only permitted small victories on that front, which are never final.

We do not intend to devalue the temporal good that might be brought about by a truly *just war*, and we are not trying to say that there is no value in fighting external evil in the world in order to establish that good; but it cannot be said too much that if the individual *is spiritually mutilated by the experience*, then what good is it that an evil man was killed and some political villain was destroyed? It is possible to win on the earthly front, which is a *relative good*, while suffering catastrophe on the spiritual front, *which is the true and lasting good*.

If your vocation is war, proceed, but proceed with utmost caution and with *brutal honesty* regarding your own corrupt nature.

The statesman is gone, replaced by the politician; the artisan is gone, replaced by the machine attendee and the wage slave. The warrior too is gone, replaced by *you*. Your vocation remains only as a husk of itself. You are not alone, and you are in no more pitiable a state than the next man, for everyone is subject to the same law of universal degeneration. Just as every vocation is degraded, so is yours, and because you must operate in the extreme, more will be asked of you than perhaps anyone else.

You will, of course, have every incentive to ignore this in favor of a more flattering view of your calling. Your friends, family, and neighbors will pat you on the back; strangers will buy your dinner and your drinks. Politicians will use you like a prop or a mascot for political gain, and you will undergo a powerful indoctrination into the pseudo-religious motivations for war and the social

fearmongering that clouds all judgement. Everything is set against you, psychologically, emotionally, socially, spiritually. Should you enter the warrior vocation of today, it will fall to you to find your own path to the celestial front, to draw out the inner infidel and to face him: everyone else will tell you he doesn't exist, that you are already a hero, that your laurels are already in your possession.

Everyone will be ready to lie to you, and in this way your challenge is far more complex than that of the traditional warrior. He fought on two fronts simultaneously; you will have to fight on *three*. You will have to fight the external enemy and the internal enemy, but in addition you will have to fight against the false affirmations, romantic exaggerations, patriotic excesses, ideological pressures, and pseudo-religious valuations shoved in your face by your own culture.

You will be defending yourself from your neighbors, even as you defend them from alien evil. If you retain your honesty, which again must be a *brutal* and *unsparing* kind of honesty, it may be possible that, against all odds, you find a way to fight on all three of these fronts. Your victory will be invisible, and you will, for the most part, be externally indistinguishable from those around you; but you will belong to a different world of meaning altogether, and victory for you will be more comprehensive, more profound, and may have little to do with what they call victory, *and it may come in spite of what they call defeat*.

### *Warning against vigilante violence.*

All this talk of resistance to evil by force makes it prudent to offer a disclaimer regarding *vigilante violence*. It is understandable, in the face of heinous corruption and depravity, to feel compelled to act against perpetrators of evil, even when no one else will act with you.

Take Scott Roeder, for example, who made himself famous by shooting an abortion doctor named George Tiller in 2009. Now, abortion is a horrifying practice, and the prevalence of abortion, and our cultural comfort with it, is an excellent example of how spiritually blind we have become. And so, Scott Roeder's act illustrates what happens when we succumb to the impulse to take matters into our own hands.

The impulse is understandable to any spiritually sighted man. Who can stand the thought of innocent children being brutally killed and

discarded, without burial, without a shred of respect? And yet many healthy men do not resort to violence in this way, which tells us that it is obviously not the right course of action. But why?

First, it is illegal, obviously. We must always keep in mind the duty to respect public authority. It is always in effect, even in the face of corrupt laws. According to traditional morality, we have the prerogative of ignoring unjust laws, but that does not extend to some kind of right to break other laws in the process. In other words, if the law compelled a certain person to have an abortion, that person could ignore the law. But that person would not be justified in shooting the abortionist. That is a separate act and goes well beyond the right to resist unjust laws.

There is of course the manly duty to protect the weak, and children would seem to fit that category. Isn't it morally permissible to step in and "rescue" a child from an attacker, even to the point of doing violence to that assailant? Here the question becomes even more complicated by the fact that in our legal system, the unborn aren't entitled to "rescue" or defense in any way. This creates a conflict of conscience. Two moral obligations are now set against each other: the obligation to protect the innocent vs. the obligation to submit to authorities. We wind up having to determine which is weightier, and we realize that all the normal guides for conduct cannot easily be applied, because they assume a normal legal hierarchy. In theory, we have a clean moral guide, but our context is bizarre.

Finally, a decisive factor is the realization that such acts of violence tend to be counterproductive. Even when it comes to all-out war, there must be reason to believe that the campaign will improve things. If it doesn't, then the war is unjust. Vigilante violence ultimately does not decrease the number of abortions, nor does it cause pro-choice people to reconsider their position. Such acts might even drum up more social support for abortionists. In other words, the random killing of abortionists is not so much *wrong* (although it is that as well), it is mostly just *imprudent* and *reckless* in terms of the actual good accomplished.

What, then, would a moral man, or a community of moral men, do? The only solution, which now seems obvious, is to start a civil war. If it was justifiable for the North and South to fight over slavery, it seems more fundamentally justifiable for the defenders of human life to resort to war for their cause, since what is at stake is not

slavery but the direct killing of defenseless persons. There would be no question of 'random vigilante acts'. We would instead be dealing with organized resistance.

This would change the context of the moral issue. Through war, the matter would be settled on a broad social level. The force in this case would be directed, not against physicians, but against their military representatives. Only in the context of a just war would it be both permissible and prudent to resort to violence against 'abortionists'. The intended outcome would be the eradication of the abortion industry entirely, and any violence would be in the service of that just goal (assuming we believed it attainable).

The problem, of course, is that our spiritual and moral vitality, as a people, is on the decline. We get enraged, but it is usually at the television set, and usually the energy of our indignation is not even strong enough to get us off the recliner. We are not the type of men who take up arms at injustice. That was trained out of us long ago.

That's why we're in this situation in the first place. It is apparent that we had our heyday as a manly culture, and now we have become *spiritually senile*, with all the cynicism, vulgarity, stupidity, and moral degeneracy that such a phrase would imply. The spiritual blindness that's been mentioned several times is but a symptom of this senility. So also is the widespread effeminacy of men.

Our argument is somewhat self-defeating: the type of humanity we are dealing with is precisely the type of humanity that is incapable of shaking itself out of self-complacency and throwing all its comforts to the wind for the sake of a principle, especially when almost all of these people have an unshakable faith in the much more comfortable alternative of voting. So long as one of the mainstream politicians says they are 'pro-life', men will vote instead of fight.

Maybe democracy is the real "opium of the people". It presents itself as the perfect means of neutralizing outrage and diverting moral energy, all without any real threat to the ruling classes, and all the while convincing good people that they have "fought the good fight". They argue a little, they vote, and they sit back down in front of the TV for another four years.

To tie all of this back to the original question—vigilante violence—we can say that not only does it fail moral criteria in almost all conceivable instances. It is also futile. These acts must therefore be resisted, even if they would satisfy one's moral indignation.

# MILITARY HISTORY AND THEORY

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### *General remarks.*

We have tried to drive home the idea of the warrior as the man who, on behalf of his people and for the sake of the good, makes great sacrifices by directly confronting evil *by way of force*. We have also made the somewhat counterintuitive claim that this undeniably noble vocation also degrades the warrior, not just physically and psychologically, but also morally and even spiritually. This will be a hard teaching for many readers, and so we will elaborate more on the *interior vicissitudes of combat* in the sections that follow. But before we address war in its interior dimensions, it is important to develop a related theme, which is the increasing dehumanization of war even in its exterior dimension, as a socio-political phenomenon.

War was made for man, and not man for war. War traditionally presented man with the possibility of confronting his own weakness and the weakness of humanity all in one moment, and through this confrontation it provided possibilities for heroism when carried out in the presence of religion and within the context of the *warrior asceticism* already mentioned. But in modern secular mass war, man is degraded in ways that, while not without precedent, were previously seen only in the most barbaric societies.

Therefore, before we examine the inner experiences of the combatant, and show how dire his situation has become, and why this experience is historically unique, we must first outline as briefly as possible a history of modern warfare from the point of view of its decadence.

We have made it clear enough that we interpret most of the institutions of the modern world as corrupted versions of their ancient analogs. This naturally applies to war, war being a manifestation in the extreme of the nobility or decadence of whatever civilization is fighting it. In the words of two prominent military theorists:

"Military institutions are intimately bound up with that state of culture which the nation has attained",[1] and "war both arises and derives its nature from the ideas, feelings, and political relations which obtain at the moment when it breaks out."[2]

We will try to avoid the feel of a general military history, touching only on certain aspects of war and the changes it has undergone in the last two thousand years, which among other things will demonstrate the so-called 'return of the armed horde', a return that happened to coincide with the wide acceptance of democratic politics and technological progress. This overview will acquaint the reader with some of the key aspects of warfare and help him understand the present global situation and interpret events that have not yet unfolded, so that he might better navigate this most serious of all enterprises.

### *Universal conscription and the return of the armed horde.*

We will begin by citing Hoffman Nickerson's excellent study, *The Armed Horde*, which summarizes the last two centuries of warfare:

> "During the last century-and-a-half, civilization has recreated the armed horde. Previously a rarity, it has become the accepted instrument of any great military effort. It has not, however, come alone. Exactly a hundred fifty years ago in 1789—shortly after the United States had sought to protect themselves against democracy by their Federal Constitution—the French Revolution began. From that time to our day, democratic ideas have come to dominate politics just as the mass army has dominated war. It is the thesis of this book that the two are inseparably connected with each other and with a third thing, barbarism."

Such a development cannot be understood without also dwelling on the institution of conscription, which today we call 'the draft', a thing taken for granted as normal but which, as we have observed elsewhere, represents an unprecedented surrender of life and limb to the whims of the state.

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[1] Von der Goltz.
[2] Carl von Clausewitz.

On this subject it has been customary for writers to cite Hippolyte Taine's reflections on conscription, and since it is hard to do better…

> "[Universal conscription] has propagated itself like a contagion…it has mastered all continental Europe and reigns there with its natural companion which always precedes or follows it, with its twin brother universal suffrage, each…dragging after it the other…both blind and formidable commanders or regulators of the…future. One puts in the hand of each adult a ballot, the other puts on the back of each a soldier's knapsack: with what promises of massacre and bankruptcy for the Twentieth Century, with what exasperation of international ill will and distrust, with what loss of wholesome effort, by what a perversion of productive discoveries, accompanied by what an improvement in the means of destruction, by what recoil toward the inferior and unhealthy forms of the old combative societies, by what a backward step toward egoistic and brutal instincts, toward the sentiments, manners and morality of ancient cities and barbaric tribes, we know all too well. To understand the matter it is enough to compare the former and the present military systems of Europe. Formerly there were few soldiers, some hundreds of thousands. Today in Europe there are eighteen million actual or potential soldiers, including all adults, even the married men and the fathers of families, either actually called up or subject to call throughout twenty or twenty five years of their lives, in short as long as they are physically fit. Formerly no lives were legally confiscated in order to shoulder the burden of military service in France. Lives were only bought by contract, and lives appropriate for such a task and otherwise idle or harmful, about a hundred and fifty thousand lives of mediocre value, which the state could expend with less regret than others, since to sacrifice them did no great harm either to society or to civilization. Today for the same service in France four million lives are seized by authority, and if they seek to escape they are seized by force. All…from their twentieth year are put to the same manual and murderous profession, including those least suited for this task and those best adapted to other employment, including…the most inventive and the most productive, the most delicate and the most cultivated, including those distinguished by superior talent of which the social value is almost infinite, and of which the compulsory miscarriage or the early end is a calamity for the human species."

> "Such is the result of the new regime; military obligations are balanced and as it were extorted by political rights. The citizen of today may put both on the scales. Let him place in one scale his sovereign prerogative…of handing in every four years one out of every ten thousand votes for the election of one out of six hundred and fifty Deputies. Let him place in the other scale his actual obligation; three, four or five years of barracks and passive obedience, later twenty eight and still later thirteen days during which he is recalled to the colors, and then twenty years of anxious waiting during every rumor of war for the order which will put a rifle in his hand to kill or be killed. Probably he will end by noting that the two weights are not equal…"[3]

We could just stop here, since these observations convey the essence of the democratic corruption of war and the resulting dehumanization and demoralization of those who participate in it, whose perpetual military service is 'extorted' via the right to fill out a piece of paper and slip it into a box in order to be selected from a pre-selected list of rulers who will determine for him his fate. Yet these problems warrant further development by example, lest the claim seem melodramatic, nor is it the end of the story. The web of punishment the modern man has spun for himself is far more extensive than even Taine could have anticipated.

### *The necessity of propaganda.*

One of the consequences of keeping on foot at all times the modern horde is that its members must be maintained in both war and peace. In peacetime they tend to be relatively well-controlled, and even during short excursions order may be kept, but during prolonged conflict the strain of war takes its toll and the barbarism that is 'latent' in the violent mass rises to the surface. The need for materials, food, water, and shelter, turns the mass army into a swarm of locusts, overwhelming every field, forest and cottage.

This is not only true of an invading horde but also applies to the society that puts to use such a colossal organization. Resources are consumed at home and abroad on a ludicrous scale. All of the accumulated capital of society disappears as if it were mere kindling for the great conflagration that is war, and all resources, both

[3] Hippolyte Taine, *Origins of Contemporary France*.

material and human (since man himself, in the mass, becomes a 'human resource') are enlisted and consumed.

How could a people tolerate this if not by the artificial reinforcement of strong emotions formed not by common sense and direct experience but instead by the various forms of media and their crafted narratives which terrify not just the adult men, but also the women, the children, and the elderly.

This necessitates the introduction (present almost from the beginning of the revolutionary period) of a psychological war that runs parallel to every political war, except that the former is aimed at the nation's own people for the sake of forming their attitudes to match those of the state. 'Popular governments' quickly realized that they could never follow the 'will of the people' in any complex matter, and at any rate the people, traditionally the realists, knew better than to try and claim 'opinions' on every issue that exists in the world. It took generations of psychological effort to convince them otherwise and to make them believe that the key to citizenship is not to be reasonable but to 'be informed', which is to say, to cobble together a 'position' from various ready-made opinions provided by the powers that be via the media.

Incredible energies are spent convincing the people that even minor events, such as border disputes or trade conflicts, are now *a threat to their very way of life* so that they will show due concern and be better disposed to die in a foreign country fighting people they do not know for reasons they do not understand.

Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any person today, citizen or soldier, understanding the complexity of the situation in the Near East, but every man *feels*, and so it is the *feeling* of threat that is built up in him, to the point that he confuses feeling for thought and expresses this confusion via the keywords that today rule our political dialogue. These meaningless feeling-ideas include terms like *freedom, terrorism, hate, security*, *liberation,* all of which are devoid of any specific content, but these are the non-reasons that motivate the population to throw in their lot with the state for whatever cause.

This is the essence of propaganda, and it operates in peace as well as in war, merely altering its tone and volume. In peacetime the great propaganda apparatus *prepares* the psychic soil of its people. It carefully grooms and fertilizes so that in the moment of need it

can activate the energies that have been nurtured, and in this way the state *calls forth* the semi-vegetative legions, from the televisions to the trenches, consuming every last grain of productive power in a bitter harvest.

There are some who describe the techniques of modern politics as modern applications of what in previous times would be called magical influence, and indeed the processes we've described do coincide with practices traditionally associated with magic. First and foremost of these techniques is hypnosis. We have read of soldiers who, at a particular moment, have the feeling of 'waking up' and wondering 'how did I get here?', only to find that they have woken into a nightmare that is all too real. Is this not very much like the feeling of one who has been lured into peril by the power of hypnosis and then left to suffer the consequences? The masters of propaganda are in a very precise sense the *sorcerers* of our age, their techniques limited only by the reach of their technological apparatus and the suggestibility of the people.

### *Ancient limits on the size of armies through the decline of the Greeks.*

To repeat a point already mentioned, it is an error to imagine the armed horde as something that has had a linear, cumulative development with its origin in the ancient world. Much to the contrary, it has its origin in the French Revolution and is therefore a production of the modern world. Such an organization was unknown in the centuries immediately preceding the liberal Enlightenment, and in the ancient world, although we can find examples such as the massive Persian horde of Xerxes, it was an exception. There are good reasons for its rarity.

The omnipresence of the institution of slavery was itself a limiting factor for armies. War was considered an aristocratic function, or at the very least a challenge to be met by men of courage and character. The flipside of this assumption is of course that the lowest classes are not fit to participate, and the lowest of classes was the slave. The vast majority of men were called to labor, not to battle, and so if the pursuit of war excludes the slave class and the non-slave poor, and if this constitutes the majority of adult males, then we can see that it would have been impossible for the Greeks to muster a very large percentage of the male population for war (or as it is called today, 'military *service*').

From the French Revolution to our own time we hear rhetoric about ‘every able-bodied male’ but no Roman or Greek aristocrat could have had such an idea in his head. Some figures place the population of slaves in the 1st century BC at thirty percent.

Another point we have trouble grasping today is that equipment was very costly and was often provided by the soldiers themselves. This limitation held throughout the centuries even to the medieval period, and it is foreign to our experience. For us, equipment is a problem of resources and industrial productive capacity, and our soldiers are ‘issued’ their weapons and supplies, but this was not the case and for the simple reason that there was no all-encompassing state to orchestrate such a process of production and provisioning.

To refer specifically to the Middle Ages, we can say with Will Durant that the State was merely the King’s estate, and coextensive with it, and his armory would only have provided for his own men. Beyond his personal estate, that is to say at all lower levels of the hierarchy down to the knights, equipment would have been self-provisioned.

In ancient times, it was not the knight but the hoplite, and his armor was fashioned from bronze and was not cheap. This is why they were recruited from the wealthy middling ranks of society. This is yet another idea that we struggle to comprehend, since in our era, the era of popular armies, the lower the social class, the more likely the person is to end up in a trench. The wealthier the individual, the less likely they are to ever see a battle up close. It was the precise opposite in ancient and medieval times, and even up to the pre-modern period, when for reasons just described, the poorer classes (and not just the slaves) were normally excluded from campaigns, except in the case of local militias, which we will not describe here since their role was short and never led them far from home.

Finally, as another limitation to the size of armies, we can cite the inability (or unwillingness) of the Greek world to unite under a single banner. They sought liberty in a manner that is foreign to modern liberal nations, who confuse liberty with power. They understood that combination for the sake of power necessarily compromises self-direction. Imagine, for example, the constraints placed on American states today, where the state remains its own unit but has no power to resist the central government in any significant matter. The Greek states would accept no such compromise, at least not for a time. Even during the wars against Xerxes the Greek world was not ‘united’ and so there could be no

central power to muster numbers. It was whatever the individual city-states brought to the conflict if and when they agreed to participate.

What of the numerical strength of these ancient armies? The combined Greek army has been estimated at 80,000 at the time when they faced the Persians at Platea. The Persian army at its largest is estimated at up to 300,000 soldiers, which exceeded not only the combined size of the Greek forces that faced them, but was not matched again until Rome's imperial period, which did not exceed it by much. In terms of manpower, we can say that the army assembled by Xerxes was one of the largest in the ancient world. Nonetheless, it was nothing in comparison to the hordes mustered continuously from the time of the French Republic to our own day.

Something interesting also about the Greeks, demonstrating again how deep their localist scruples ran, was their refusal to naturalize anyone, even in cases when war broke out and they did conquer a city or group. The conquest of a neighbor meant only that they had a new territory to watch over and did not yield additional citizens and military strength. Athens allowed foreigners to live in the city but did not make them citizens. This distinguished Athens from Rome, which represents a more familiar approach to conquest. Rome encouraged immigration and naturalization and continuously extended citizenship. Even if Rome was institutionally still quite different from modern imperial projects, it was recognizably 'cumulative' with regard to political power and Empire-building. The Greeks, for their part, insisted on retaining their local 'personality', and the local gods to which city-states were committed were perhaps the biggest factor here, and so they gained little through conquest and so for a time they were not tempted to it.

By the 4th century BC, the states had reached their peak and suffered from the type of spiritual exhaustion that afflicts many societies in their senile period. We see the emergence of the great philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, but Rene Guenon was right to conclude by their appearance that Greece had entered its decline. Philosophy, the *love of wisdom*, carries with it an implication that one does not possess wisdom but rather longs for it, and this is a posture of the elderly, or of an elderly culture. Aristotle does not personify the vitality of Greece but rather stands at the conclusion of its vital period. The death of Socrates marks the finishing touch of a cycle of civilization that is itself nearly finished.

One of the harbingers of the end, ironically, the events that moderns are most impressed by and consider a great achievement: the establishment of radical democracy in Athens.

By radical democracy we mean *direct democracy*, or the participation of every citizen aged twenty and over in the assembly, with virtually unlimited powers granted to that assembly. It was in any case an experiment in mob rule, and if the mob broke the law the worst that could happen was that they'd punish whoever proposed the crime.

The assembly of this period was known for its oration, which is to say, emotionally inflamed speeches aimed at encouraging the mob, for that is the only mechanism by which such oration works. All of the rhetoric that was ever framed as an appeal to free speech in the history of our civilization has ultimately been nothing more than a request for access to the ear of the mob.

We have already said that the citizen soldier, in the form of the hoplite, was the primary participant in state military campaigns (we do not count smaller squabbles over things like farming rights and harvest conflicts, wherein the local militia would suffice). The primary weapon of the hoplite was the spear (the sword would play a larger role in Roman tactics) and the primary Greek battle formation was the phalanx, which meant that some engagements looked like an epic pushing match where most casualties took place after the confrontation was already decided. This, by the way, is a common occurrence in the history of war: again and again we find that the bulk of the casualties occur after the rout and after the defeated enemy has turned his back to flee. We'll discuss this in more detail in our section on combat psychology.

There was the defensive campaign against Xerxes, where the phalanx proved superior and the Greeks were able to inflict casualties very disproportionate to their numbers. Then a series of civil wars, the most significant being the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. These developments are telling, because prior to this period we do not notice the Greek city-states being particularly warlike and it is difficult to find any great military campaigns prior to the period we have in mind, unless of course we count the great Trojan War described in the Homeric epics, but these stories, being mythical in quality, melt into pre-history. For the most part, insofar as we have a record, the Greeks were mostly peaceful.

The civil wars were a drain, materially and spiritually. Then also the colonial projects were put into play. The famous episode of extortion between Athens and Melos occurred in 416 BC, and ended with the senseless slaughter of all the men of Melos and the enslavement of all the women and children. Then began the class wars with all of the political divisions that such conflicts lead to.

Other hallmarks of decay were present, such as rampant sexual perversion, abortion, and naturally a decline in population. Greece never recovered from this period of decline, and it was here that Alexander the Great of Macedonia (a strong monarchy on the edge of the Greek world), became a legend through his exploits against the Persians, but the days of Athens were over.

For the sake of our outline, we will only point out, regarding Alexander the Great, that his campaign represents a shift in recruitment. After his success there would be a growing tendency to rely on mercenaries over citizen armies. The shift coincides with the *spiritual decline* of the Greek citizens themselves, who became far less inclined to go to the field for any cause. Having accumulated some wealth, they realized it was much easier to simply hire out professionals to fight in whatever conflicts they could afford and if they could not afford them, they did not fight them, since it was not yet possible to wage war 'on credit' the way governments do today.

### *The military characteristics of Rome.*

The Roman military system was superior to any other in antiquity. The phalanx was modified to the Roman manipular legion. The former resembled something like a layered mass of spears and was effective defensively but allowed minimal initiative for the separate units and individual soldiers and was almost useless over irregular terrain. The Roman legion exchanged the spear for the throwing javelin and in tight combat relied on large shields and the sword, which was always used to stab and (if the soldier followed his training) never to hack and slice. The formation used by the Romans resembled "blocks" of ranks staggered in such a way that the army looked like a checkerboard. How exactly this functioned in engagements is not precisely known, but it allowed greater movement for units and was far more flexible. Also by exchanging the spear or longer Macedonian pike for the sword (*gladius*) the Romans were essentially trading defensive power for offensive flexibility, the weakness of the phalanx being that, although virtually impenetrable, it could not maneuver.

Another distinct development contributing to Roman military mastery, we see the move from the citizen soldier to the professional soldier. At its largest it may have been around 380,000 strong if we count auxiliaries which were rarely active. The legionaries were only 150,000 strong.

We are not here concerned with an interpretation of the fall of the Roman Empire, which is an enlightening subject of study but diverges too much from the type of military history we are presenting here. Our main concern is to discover the limiting factors present in social organization and technology. Suffice it to say that many of the same problems that came to Athens also came to Rome, and a society that succeeds too long and knows great wealth always fares poorly when eventually confronted with an enthusiastic enemy. Nor was it a question of being overwhelmed by a particularly powerful enemy with superior numbers or technology. Rather it was a 'death by a thousand cuts' in which the various barbarian tribes seemingly took turns ravaging the empire: Visigoths, Vandals, Saxons, Franks, Ostrogoths, Lombards, and finally the Muslims.

The military organization of the barbarians does not carry so many lessons for us since, again, these were not an expression of civilization and social order and they were never large groups anyway. What interests us about them is what became of them after they each carved out a portion of the 'imperial corpse' for themselves, settled, and converted to Christianity in order to establish Christendom which arranged itself according to the social system known as feudalism.

### *Military campaigns in the Middle Ages.*

We proceed now to the Middle Ages, not because nothing happened for several centuries after Rome's decomposition, but mostly because in order to gain the insights we are concerned with, we need a highly developed social form, and the social form that was the feudal system took some time to develop.

The unifying influence of Christianity on the continent that had previously been the Roman 'world' cannot be overstated. For the first time, men perceived distinctions between themselves not strictly based on geography but between the believer and the non-believer. This could not but contribute to peace, and this is why, again, we say that it is wrong to imagine the medieval period as unusually 'warlike'.

The organization of feudalism was influenced by the invasions of previous centuries and with a view toward local defense rather than a centrally controlled professional military. This emphasis led to autonomy, or what in Catholic social teaching is called 'subsidiarity' and basically means that with regard to the various levels of the social hierarchy, whatever a lower level can do, it should do, and only when a higher level of authority or organization is really needed should such an authority intervene. Such a principle acted as a centripetal force on power creating a web of rulers rather than a pyramid. This in turn worked against the organization of massive armies except in those cases where all the regions agreed that their collective identity was at stake, such as during the Crusades, at which point they willingly contributed their fighters to a collective cause.

The Crusades were carried out against an external enemy, however. Within Christendom, that is to say between one Christian and another Christian, were severely hobbled by the regulations of the spiritual authority known as the Catholic Church.

Nor were civil wars common since, contrary to the style of Western government since Athens and on through Rome, governments were now determined by assemblies or elections but by heredity. No longer could the orators easily work on the mob, and since the various 'kingdoms' were considered the personal domain of the rulers, they were far less likely to squander their wealth. There is a degree of realism in this style of government that is not present in popular governments where the 'wealth of the nation' is an abstract thing, almost like an imaginary collective bank account that receives contributions from current, previous, and today even future generations, to be drawn on without limits by any politician who can gain access to it.

The feudal system involved hierarchical obligations, but we must remember that from the point of view of the scale of military operations, there were serious limits inherent in it. When a lord invoked the feudal 'obligation' of a vassal, it was for a short time only, as has always been the case with 'local militia' style military organization. Their oaths of allegiance were something like forty days in a calendar year. Such a limitation boggles the mind of the modern who believes himself more free than the medievalist, and yet takes as normal the power of a state ruler a thousand miles away to call upon him to travel to another country for a campaign of

indefinite duration based on an oath he only took implicitly by having been born in a ruled territory.

As for the taxes which today are the lifeblood of military campaigns, since they are incredibly expensive, the medieval prince has to convince his subordinates that a campaign was worthwhile in order to get them to contribute any financial support to it. But first and foremost he funded his projects out of his own purse. Again we refer to Durant's quote earlier that the state, in the medieval period, was merely the king's estate.

The prohibition against usury was always a substantial limit. As we all know today, the ability to wage a war on credit against the finances of current and future generations is an abyss that has no end. Debt-based campaigns were non-existent at this time.

Another limiting aspect of Christendom was the fact of numerous religious restrictions that were always in effect, something completely foreign to modern societies. Just a few examples can be noted: it was forbidden to fight near Church property, to attack women or peasants, cattle or agricultural implements, students, etc., in other words there was immunity by precept for a significant part of the population. As for days of the week, there could be no fighting from Wednesday evening to Monday morning, so that left three days for wars between Christians to be pursued, and even this small window was often closed by the rest of the liturgical calendar that included seasons like Lent, Advent, and numerous feast days, all of them prohibiting the business of war.

We can point out here that as we mention these limitations it is necessary to keep in mind that they applied to Christendom, and the same caveat will have to be considered later when we consider the problem of adapting Just War Theory, which is Christian in origin, to modern warfare. What the modern adaptations seek is a universal theory of war, but Just War was never applied to non-Christian powers. The church was wise enough to see that among those of a shared identity war works by different rules and things must be handled differently when it is a question of external wars, wars between Christians and forces who intend to destroy Christianity.

Thus, we find that the church, from the medieval period on, denies the right of conquest between Christians, and so a war over hereditary rights would be valid but a war of conquest plain and simple, based on strength or economic advantage, would not be

allowed (even if, at times, these things were done anyway). The West had not yet discovered the concept of 'interest' leading to the idea of 'national interest' that would become prominent in modern global politics.

All in all, we find in the Middle Ages so many local, autonomous princes organizing themselves for agricultural subsistence living and fighting first and foremost to protect their lands and people against raiding heathens or, occasionally, other Christian powers within the context of numerous limiting precepts.

As for the size of armies, we find a wealthy leader like William the Conqueror (11th century England) able to put fifty thousand men on the field at Hastings. That was a large force for this period and he was exceptionally wealthy. Other significant battles were decided on the basis of much smaller armies, such as the battle of Muret (13th century France) where Simon de Montfort prevailed with only sixteen hundred men. This allows us to understand the power of the moral unity that was Christendom, since compared to the singular phenomenon of the Crusades, where several hundred thousand marched so far for such a lofty purpose, the battles between Christians in Europe look like scrimmages.

Before continuing we should clarify the motivation for the Crusades, since there is a misconception that its purpose was to convert the Muslims. On the contrary, everywhere the teaching of the church has agreed with the futility of mental compulsion as a tactic to convert non-believers. That is to say, it has warned against trying to compel belief by force, and always other religions have been permitted to live and practice religion freely within the bounds of Christendom. For that matter, Muhammad also made declarations supporting the right of Christians to worship in lands controlled by his forces. What motivated the Holy Wars was not conversion but a claim of right, since in the social theories of the Middle Ages wars are justified if an enemy is preventing the free practice of the Christian religion in a territory where it has a claim to practice. Although Christians were by treaty allowed to live and practice within the Abode of Islam, nonetheless these significant domains had passed out of Christian hands and so it was viewed as a dispossession of the Christian faith. Thus, it was in order to 'rescue' and 'reclaim' the rule of the Holy Land by pre-existing right that the Crusades were considered valid, at least theoretically, and not for the sake of conquest and forced conversion, as is commonly believed.

The decline of the medieval world can be explained in just as many ways as the decline of the Roman Empire, perhaps even with more complexity, but at some point it is necessary to admit that *all good things come to an end*. The laws of entropy are in effect at all times, and just as we would not look upon an old man who has become frail with age, who is nearing death, and as in shock, "How could this have happened? How could he have become so weak? Will he expire?" because we know already that he will expire, and that as a matter of course, as a mortal creature, he must weaken and expire, so also we ought not to dream of the neverending preeminence of any social institution, however noble. The only institution we have good reason to trust in terms of longevity is the church itself, with respect to its presence and its maintenance of the truth of the Gospel, but this is only due to supernatural preservation by the Holy Spirit, and the church survives *in spite of* man, and *in spite of its worldly organization*, and not because of any temporal superiority.

It is futile and foolish to seek out worldly explanations for the longevity of the Christian religion; and as for Christendom, it is just as futile to ask why it did *not* have the same longevity. Christ did not promise the preservation of *civilization*.

With that said, we do not intend to ignore the factors that were present as if they were irrelevant. It is naive to imagine that a civilization of any form could prevail forever, but if decay seems to have been accelerated in some way, it is good to try and discover the causes of that acceleration, since that will allow us to discern the social diseases that work to undermine and cut short the healthy lifespan that might have been possible.

For Christendom, if religious unity was the secret to its life and peace, it was religious disunity that hastened its death through the introduction of unprecedented strife. By this we refer to the Reformation, but not the reformation only, since it represents only the theological manifestation of the European departure from the sacred. The Reformation combined with other movements of the same spirit (Capitalism, Enlightenment liberalism, Humanism) to usher in the modern world. Along with this spiritual transition, the limited and highly regulated wars of the medieval period became a thing of the past, and a new barbarism was unleashed, of which the Thirty Years War is the preeminent example, wherein it is actually recorded that prisoners were in some instances killed in order to eat them, in a symbolic descent to the most horrifying forms of conflict.

Since it was the church who had set the tone and its moral precepts the limit of military conduct, the dethronement and subsequent demonization of the church meant that anarchy ensued. In the wars of religion that followed the Reformation, there were truly *no rules* to govern the parties involved.

Even though the size of the participating armies was not usually any larger than those of the earlier medieval period, the destruction was much more severe, because again there were no limits on who could be attacked, on what could be destroyed, and on when and where the fighting could occur. The church itself, which had been a protected category and by proxy had protected those associated with it or employed by it in its work, became a target and subject to plunder. Loss of life in some areas is considered to be as much as 85% of the population due to starvation and disease, such is the outcome of the abandonment of order and moderation.

Such was the end of the Middle Ages, of feudalism. The power of the Catholic Church to influence public life would never again come close to what it was, and the conduct of the participants in the Thirty Years War was perhaps a precursor to the horrors that would follow in a few centuries when the much vaunted popular governments would finally build their utopias and conduct their wars free of any religious influence whatsoever.

### *The enemy and the Enemy.*

It is said that man 'needs an enemy in order to know he's alive', or else that he needs bad men in order to know that he's a good man.

The sense that we are supposed to be fighting evil is, of course, fundamental to the traditional outlook but the problem today is that, robbed of any religious framework to situate and interpret this need, man is left to his devices and seeks out evil strictly on the socio-political plane. Instead of being able to see that this yearning is nothing more than his spiritual awareness of the presence of the Adversary, or Satan, the worldly man looks to pacify his thirst not via religion first and foremost, but exterior conflict exclusively.

This need to fight evil in the absence of spiritual introspection drives entire populations to look for a worldly enemy to fight, and this is a tragedy because it is in principle a legitimate impulse, but only if understood as first and foremost an *interior war* against evil inside oneself. This interior war about which the modern world knows

nothing is called in Islam the 'Greater Jihad'. Only secondarily, after we have understood the true nature of evil, should we pursue the 'Lesser Jihad' that involves man in the battle against external evil, which is to say, against other men.

Absent the spiritual framework to contextualize, direct, and moderate the desire to face the enemy, the Greater Jihad evaporates and all of the constructive yearnings that ought to have 'fought it out' on the inner plane are enlisted via propaganda for the sake of global political projects. Nationalism and patriotism are made to replace religion and the warrior ascesis. The concepts of 'honor among warriors' and mutual respect between enemies are a thing of the past, and modern methods of conditioning work to ensure that this remains the case.

Ernst Junger was truly the exception when he wrote in *Storm of Steel*:

> "It has always been my ideal in war to eliminate all feelings of hatred and to treat my enemy as an enemy only in battle and to honour him as a man according to his courage. It is exactly in this that I have found many kindred souls among British officers. It depends, of course, on not letting oneself be blinded by an excessive national feeling, as the case generally is between the French and the Germans. The consciousness of the importance of one's own nation ought to reside as a matter of course and unobtrusively in everybody, just as an unconditional sense of honour does in the gentleman. Without this it is impossible to give others their due."

We forget, and are conditioned never to realize, that the real Enemy in ourselves is the same as the one present in the soldier who opposes us, and this alters the relationship and is part of what makes modern war different from war between religious peoples.

### *The importance of moral unity for society.*

Emmerich de Vattel, who was advantageously positioned in 1758 to see the outcomes of the disenfranchisement of the Catholic Church and its replacement by nationalism, wrote of the consequences for war:

> "each party, asserting that they have justice on their own side, will arrogate to themselves all the rights of war, and maintain

> that their enemy has none, that his hostilities are so many acts of robbery, so many infractions of the law of nations, in the punishment of which all states should unite. The decision of the controversy, and of the justice of the cause, is so far from being forwarded by it, that the quarrel will become more bloody, more calamitous in its effects, and also more difficult to terminate. Nor is this all: the neutral nations themselves will be drawn into the dispute, and involved in the quarrel. If an unjust war cannot, in its effect, confer any right, no certain possession can be obtained of any thing taken in war, until some acknowledged judge (and there is none such between nations) shall have definitively pronounced concerning the justice of the cause: and things so acquired will ever remain liable to be claimed, as property carried off by robbers."[4]

He is speaking of war, obviously, but what he says is a result of the loss of moral unity for society *in general*. One could even say that without a more or less explicit agreement as to what constitutes the good life any society is destined to disintegrate because immediately its members will fall into tribes who see their enemies not as opponents in a disagreement about policy or conduct, but rather as representatives of evil, as 'threats to our way of life'.

In that context, our enemy must be seen as a criminal, not as a party who has the right to wage war for his interests, a right that nations obviously must possess. Instead he is a brigand out for plunder who must be put down, a representative of lawlessness, or a devil. We see the beginnings of what is now the norm, where the limiting effects of mutual respect deteriorate and the moral paintbrush colors everything black and white.

The reason Christendom worked was because it was a web of nations united under a single, coherent belief system and wars took place without one party completely foregoing that moral unity. Therefore they could not avoid acknowledging that their enemy was at least still a Christian, which is to say, to some degree *like ourselves*. And anyone who forgot could be reminded via the influence of the Church, which acted as an effective supra-national moral authority in a way that the League of Nations or what-have-you never could.

With that unity abandoned, we see immediately that all recognition of fellowship with one's enemy—seeing him as *another human*

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[4] Emmerich Vattel, *The Law of Nations or the Principles of Natural Law.*

*being very much like ourselves*—all of this is off the table, if not treasonous. War becomes a clash, not only of political interests, but of entirely different moral visions. Such was the case in the Thirty Years War, and that conflict was perhaps the most barbaric war in 500 years.

### *The arrival of the musket.*

By the time we reach the 18th century, armor is almost irrelevant and the pike a thing of the past. The musket had established itself as the most effective weapon at any range less than a hundred yards. Let us offer a few remarks on the nature of this transition.

It has been observed by at least one author that during this period, the longbow would still have been more deadly in some cases than the musket, and the same author hypothesizes that the fearsome report of the musket led to the preference for it over the bow. But this is the kind of interpretation we would expect from a psychologist, for it ignores all the practical advantages that firearms offer. A more reasonable explanation would be that the longbow required dedication and serious training in order to be effective. One could not wield a longbow at distance after only a few weeks of training, despite what Hollywood training montages would lead us to believe. A firearm, on the other hand, and especially such a blunt instrument as the early musket, could be placed in the hands of just about any able-bodied man and it becomes more a process of learning a procedure than of developing a skill and refining one's dexterity over time.

The firearm, in other words, allowed for the democratization of war. That is, in fact, why Japan became one of the early leaders in firearm manufacture and use, and then abandoned them completely for as long as they could. They were, as a people, introspective enough to see what was happening and where this would lead them, and they opted out for reasons of pride and to avoid the mass slaughter that would inevitably come.

To elaborate, the Japanese, like many other traditional cultures, had a warrior ascesis that was profoundly expressed in the person of the Samurai, whose business was war. The introduction of firearms nullified the lifetime of skill and dedication and spiritual focus that was the essence of the samurai vocation, since a shower of lead will bludgeon the most skillful and the most useless fighter indiscriminately. Nor was there any honor in it, since it made

impossible the one-on-one combat wherein the individual samurai could define himself through victory or defeat, and where heroes are made. With the arrival of the musket, the style of war that emphasizes individual heroism, something like what is detailed through Homer's battle descriptions, is swept away in favor of a battlefield that resembles popular democracy and is its natural expression, where anyone can kill anyone and no one knows who they killed or what was accomplished.

Regarding our focus in this section, which is the growth of war in recent history, the importance of the introduction of the firearm cannot be overstated. It made possible a situation of mass participation and mass killing that otherwise could not be, and marks a point of origin for the primacy of technology over skill in battle. That is not to say that skill no longer mattered, or that technology never mattered much before, but that it is now for the first time reasonable to suggest that technology mattered more than skill.

Japan saw the return of the armed horde, and recoiled in horror. Europe, always more enamored with technology and innovation, did not sense this or at least did not show the same hesitation and as soon as firearms could be placed in the hands of every man on the battlefield, they were.

### *Superior firepower through rank and file.*

The firearm drastically simplifies the technique of weaponry by streamlining the various angles and ranges of attack that at one point were associated with spears, swords, and bows. Everything is reduced to the simple act of hurling a chunk of lead at high speed directly at the enemy.

Originally there were formations of rank (lines of men side by side) and file (columns of men front to back) designed to achieve 'continuous fire'. The first man would fire then the one behind him would step forward to take his turn, and so on. How deep the file line needed to run was determined by how fast the individual could reload. Early on this meant up to eight men in file, and this would allow enough time for the first man to be reloaded and ready by the time his turn came up again in the order. Eventually this was refined to the point that only four ranks were needed.

Soon it was discovered that the 'volley' was more effective than continuous free fire. The reasons for this are partially psychological (which we've discussed elsewhere regarding the high percentage of soldiers who try not to engage the enemy), such that firing in unison made it more difficult to look like you were firing when in fact you were not. But the volley was also very practical, since it ensured that the officer could better direct the collective firepower of the rank in order to maximize destruction. Finally, the emphasis on firing in unison helped to minimize the problems that occur when ranks get out of line, since one step in front of the men next to you meant that you'd have your eardrums blown in, and one step behind your neighbors meant you'd blow theirs.

By forbidding men to fire until commanded to do so, the tension of battle was raised to a peak. This is why we see commanders at that time show so much pride in their discipline since this type of combat depends entirely on discipline. Since the armies march toward each other and fire in volleys, and since firearms at this point became exponentially more deadly at closer ranges, it became a context of nerve to see who could hold their fire the longest. The side that fired too early would have to reload while the opposing side kept on walking and closed the distance further in order to fire at terrifyingly close range.

We can envision the contest as very much an internal affair, with the officers, knowing the strength (or weakness) of their troops, would be trying to determine the risk of their soldiers losing their nerve and sending of a scattered volley, which would decide the whole battle since, knowing that they had doomed themselves, they would then flee the field. It became a maxim, in fact, that whoever fired first lost the battle, and attempts were even made to draw enemy fire as early as possible.

We then encounter situations between disciplined troops where they almost come within arm's reach without firing a shot. This led to the tactical recommendation that it was only advisable to fire first if one's line had advanced within a few yards of the enemy. At that point it was safe to fire and then, under cover of the substantial cloud of smoke for which black powder was known, it would be easy to rush in and overrun the enemy.

This style of combat made rigorous demands on officers and troops alike, since it meant that careless misalignment between ranks could be disastrous. Hence the importance of drilling for 18th century

warfare. A corresponding issue was terrain. Maneuvering was difficult enough on perfectly flat ground, and became almost impossible in the face of any irregularity.

### *The 18th century prejudice against quantity.*

By all observations philosophical, economic, political, and religious, we observe in the 18th century a turn toward quantity over quality. Industrial capitalism and its obsession with productivity, the Protestant Reformation with the belief that the more Bibles printed the more Christianity will prosper, the political turn toward universal suffrage and all forms of individualism, the materialism of the sciences, etc. All arguments against quality seemed to have been settled against it and it was on its way out. But not yet in warfare. War seemed to lag behind and if we observe the attitudes of the commanders we even sense a kind of disdain for developments that would make strategy and tactics nothing more than a numbers game.

Thus at the very birth of mass society we find sentiments like that of Count Turpin de Crisse:

> "Battles are won not by numbers but by the manner of forming your troops together with their order and discipline."

And Santa Cruz writes:

> "Position and terrain are more important than numbers. An impregnable position is better than one on a plain even though the latter has more troops to hold it than the former."

Marshal Saxe famously said that a field army should not exceed 46,000 and that "A greater army is only an embarrassment."

These are summarized by the English general Burgoyne who wrote of "the idea that trained troops are invincible against any number or any position of undisciplined rabble…"

The strangeness of these sentiments disappears, however, when we see that these men represent the remnants of the aristocracy, and therefore give voice to what is always and everywhere the concern of a true aristocracy, which is the refinement of all things and the elevation of life to an art, and this means a contempt for any development that reduces an undertaking to its basest elements. This was the spirit that won out in Japan until the West intervened.

In the West itself, the aristocratic spirit was on its last breath and could not stem the tide. Although, as the citations above show, the leadership of military institutions remained aristocratic for a time, the French Revolution eventually normalized recruiting its leadership from all ranks of society. This will be discussed in turn. For the moment we need only mark the attitude toward quantity and that on the field armies were larger than the medieval period but not exponentially larger, with forces ranging up to the size of the army of Frederick the Great at up to 180,000.

### *Remnants of medieval cosmopolitanism.*

One striking aspect of war is the cosmopolitanism of its participants, which today would look, at the very least, like an offense against patriotism, and at most, would be downright criminal.

In medieval times the professional soldier, something like the chivalric knight ranging across the world looking for an adventure and ready to enlist in whatever cause presents itself, exemplifies the complete lack of national identity that would have been normal. While not quite the same in the 18th century, there was a similar absence of national feeling since it was rather a vocation to serve in war and not specifically a war for one's country of birth.

For professional armies that had to recruit from the cheapest of ranks, it might make sense that they did not discriminate between local poor and foreign poor for their recruits. Half the French army before the revolutionary period (which marks the obliteration of cosmopolitanism) was of foreign origin. The Prussian military as well was up to one-third foreign. Nor was it considered immoral and unreasonable for defeated forces to join with the opposition. As for the leaders, a professional officer would not have considered it offensive to offer his services to a foreign prince.

The fact that this was a general social attitude not limited to the military alone is demonstrated by the conduct of the common people during war. It was normal for commerce and travel to continue as usual and the historical record shows representatives of government during this time expressing frustration when their citizens were on friendly terms with an invading army, receiving them as regular customers in their shops. Even men of celebrity status during the Seven Years War (1756 - 1763) could go from England to Paris, where the French could cheer the arrival of the

famous visitor despite his foreign citizenship and all while the two countries were at war. It did not seem to raise any eyebrows.

These sentiments imparted to the men of this period a tranquility that we no longer imagine possible, and which is summarized by the famous historian Edward Gibbon, writing in *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

> "In war the European forces are exercised by temperate and undecisive contests. The Balance of Power will continue to fluctuate, and the prosperity of our own or the neighboring kingdoms may be alternately exalted or depressed; but these partial events cannot essentially injure our general state of happiness, the system of arts and laws and manners, which so advantageously distinguish, above the rest of Mankind, the Europeans and their colonists."

Mass warfare would soon efface Gibbon's perspective, since war would in that context become every man's concern and put every man's life on the line. This reality, combined with incessant nationalist propaganda to incense people against the demonic enemy, would ensure that strife extended to all quarters and would there be fueled to new degrees of animosity.

### *The French Revolution, Rousseau, and the dawn of mass war.*

Here we come to the famous and oft-quoted decree of 'levée en masse' by the Convention of 1793:

> "From this moment until such time as its enemies shall have been driven from the soil of the Republic, all Frenchmen are in permanent requisition for the services of the armies. The young men shall fight; the married men shall forge arms and transport provisions; the women shall make tents and clothes and shall serve in the hospitals; the children shall turn old linen into lint; the old men shall betake themselves to the public squares in order to arouse the courage of the warriors and preach hatred of kings and the unity of the Republic."

From the point of view of the present day, this is no shock and could have been written by any government in the heat of World War II, but from the point of view of the entirety of history leading up to the decree, it symbolized an almost unbelievable increase of power on

the part of the state over all persons in a nation…*permanently*. Even in the United States, which originally was very much against not only conscription but even the concept of the standing army, we still live under the shadow of this decree, and we hear it echoed whenever significant conflicts arise.

How can we explain this phenomenon? How did they do what no king could ever accomplish and lay claim to absolute possession of all people and things?

These were the early and zealous converts to a new religion, since after Christianity the religious void and moral disunity could only persist for so long until some new faith or ideology laid claim to the conscience of the social body. The new religion was to be that of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who can be considered one of the prophets of modern liberalism.

The traditional and Catholic anthropology had always presented man as a mix of good and evil with the understanding that some external force or social education was necessary and good in order to make men into *good men*, and that civilization existed for the sake of the *good life*, and only through participation in society could people fully realize their own potential for goodness.

For Rousseau, all of this was an illusion. Man was in fact good, and good by nature and therefore at his best in the 'state of nature'. This supposed pre-social state, in which men were men but had not yet compromised their dignity by joining together in society, is one of the founding myths of modern political thought. It is based on no evidence whatsoever and is a purely imaginary production. But ideology works on the imagination first and foremost, and according to Rousseau the ideal man was the 'noble savage' who was untouched by civilization, since the latter could only have a detrimental impact on his development. The products of culture were, for Rousseau, evidence of weakness, and the moral education that was so necessary in the Catholic view was for Rousseau an oppression: *man is born free but is everywhere in chains.*

From Rousseau we also received the concept of the *general will*, which is the collective will of all individuals made manifest in law, or at least all legitimate law is a manifestation of the general will, and when we obey the law we are only obeying our own wills, and the government is of course only the minister and servant of this will which is automatically noble and so cannot err.

Needless to say there was no room for either aristocrats or priests in such a philosophy, and on the contrary these would become the enemies of humanity since everywhere priests and the nobility had worked together to raise mankind from its natural state in a process of moral education and cultural refinement. They claimed to make man more human and more virtuous, but in the new view, they actually made man more *artificial* and therefore *less virtuous*. In the new Gospel, this was the worst thing that could happen and this is why aristocrats, priests, and nuns were beheaded alike to make way for the new world order.

At any rate, France had discovered the heir to Christianity, which was to be liberalism with its doctrines of Liberty and Equality, and it mattered little that these two principles are naturally antagonistic to one another and one must always be sacrificed on the altar of the other, for no two natural men are equal, and the only way to make them equal is to subject them to an equalizing force, the Procrustes Bed, but then they are not free and are brutally disfigured thereby, and so it goes.

The two antagonistic principles work in tandem. Liberty is the lofty ideal that gets everyone excited, since who does not desire greater liberty? And who can deny its nobility? But since in practice liberty is only an earned thing and never something that can be decreed or made real, but rather presents itself as the very challenge of one's life to become free, in the end the fervor for equality would win out almost completely. The first result of this new mentality would be hostility to the internal enemies that exemplified social inequality, the aristocracy.

What of the man in the street? How does he fare in the age of Rousseau? Since the Revolutionary government is, presumably, the government of the people, manifesting the general will and therefore cannot go wrong, it stands to reason that if the government decides to take possession of every man and woman and child for whatever purpose, they are really only volunteering themselves, and if they don't like it, they only have themselves to blame, since it is their own more noble will that afflicts them. It is the same today, under the aegis of 'self-government', and almost all believers in democracy feel the struggle, always despising the overreach of the government but unable to throw off the belief that the government is willed by them. They live in a state of contradiction where they must trust theory over their own eyes and ears, and remarkably they usually trust the theory.

We can already see the impending disappearance of the distinction between combatant and non-combatant. If "all Frenchmen" are requisitioned permanently, and every home is but a small war factory in some fashion, then every Frenchman and every Frenchman's home is a military target, to use modern terminology. This is precisely the logic that led to Dresden, Hamburg, and Hiroshima.

Below we will mention various changes that took place in war as a result of the social revolution described here, but just to anticipate the magnitude of what was to come, we can say that by the time we arrive at Carnot's famous decree, the military was to become one of the largest hordes ever to be assembled.

By September of 1794 the Revolutionary Army had 1,500,000 men under arms.

***Democracy makes men cheap.***

The Committee of Public Safety spoke on August 23, 1793:

> "All citizens are indebted to liberty. Some owe it their craft, others their wealth, these their expertise, those their labor…Every physical and moral ability, every political and industrial resource is put to the service of the fatherland…Thus all are requisitioned, though not all will march…Arms! Arms and food! This is the cry of necessity."

We are sufficiently 'broken' into these oppressions here in the 21st century, since we've lived under this kind of rhetoric for so long it seems obvious. But to those who compare what came before with what happened, the obvious appropriation of the religious sense is obvious.

To quote Toynbee, "at one stroke of baleful magic the French state was transformed from a public utility into a goddess."

And this would be a goddess who required a continuous flow of countless human sacrifices.

If you owe the state everything and, from this odd point of view, the state owes you nothing but your orders, then you are an instrument to its purposes. Conscription combined with the techniques of basic training and tactics of mass war would soon train the state to see one

batch of recruits as identical to the next, and if one army is wiped out, the only consideration is whether or not there are still people to conscript, and if there are, they will be just as good. The entire population is at power's disposal, and each individual has no significant value in the face of the war effort.

In a democracy and under the rule of conscription, even in times such as our own when soldiers are paid, the average citizen offers up the men for soldiering and, via taxation, writes the checks, and yet he has no real say in what is done with either the man or the money. Indeed, democracy has accomplished one thing for certain: it has made men cheap, if not free. Governments, tempted by an almost endless supply of this cheap resource, have little incentive not to waste it.

We will see this develop in extreme form under Napoleon who was famous for saying, "I can afford to expend thirty thousand men per month." Heavy casualties do not matter, short of national exhaustion in which case there's almost no nation left to fight for anyhow. But as long as the population gives itself into the state's hands, waste no time in complex maneuvers but instead hurl your massive swarm of bodies against the enemy as quickly as possible and smother him, regardless of cost in 'human material'.

### *Changes in the military during the French Revolution.*

Guglielmo Ferrero wrote:

> "Restricted warfare was one of the loftiest achievements of the eighteenth century. It belongs to a class of hot-house plants which can only thrive in an aristocratic and qualitative civilization. We are no longer capable of it. It is one of the fine things we have lost as a result of the French Revolution."

If in the preceding centuries we saw an increase in recruiting from the lower classes for the maintenance of larger armies, the officer class was still part of the aristocracy. The French Revolutionaries, however, distrusted the representatives of the aristocracy and so the final barrier to the total 'democratization' of the military was demolished. Now recruitment would come from any social class and any social class could rise to any rank. A great victory, from the modern point of view.

From a practical point of view there is nothing particularly harmful or unjust about military recruitment from the dregs of society since those men often struggle to interface with their communities anyway and so the military absorbs and transmutes otherwise useless social elements to a noble purpose. This is why there is some truth to the adage that the military will 'make a man out of you'. But for the French, the problem was not so much who they recruited but the speed and volume of recruitment. The decree of universal compulsory military service exponentially increased the necessary bureaucracy of the military organization. Not only the recruitment process but the training had to be improvised to accommodate the massive groups who were incoming, and there were significant 'growing pains' along the way.

As for changes in combat, the expulsion of the aristocracy from leadership in war meant the expulsion of the aristocratic spirit that we have already characterized as a moderating force in 17th and 18th century warfare. War, when it was between members of the nobility, was a personal and yet objective display of skill, a chess game for prizes, and although it was always lethal it was only rare that it became a fight of absolute good against absolute evil. It was completely unnecessary to frame things in that way, since it was understood perfectly well by both parties that worldly ends were being pursued by combat, and it was safely assumed that neither of the belligerents were mad men bent on total destruction. There were limits to which neither side was willing to go.

The expulsion of the aristocratic spirit meant conversely an influx of *popular spirit*, and this carried with it the same set of motivations and over simplistic ideas that worked on the common people in political movements of the period. Everything was portrayed as moral in character, black and white, and support was dependent on emotional fervor more than specific worldly intentions. From thenceforth wars would be fought for 'liberty, equality, and fraternity', which would mean anything and in itself implies no end to the fighting short of utopia. This is the same rhetoric that today is used constantly by the United States, as it fights for various worldly ends but always has to justify these interventions with silly rhetoric about 'making the world safe for democracy'. It must appeal to the people, and the people do not care about the economic advantage of access to a certain port with a name they cannot pronounce in a country they've never heard of.

Finances were always another problem for any government waging war. For the medieval king he usually operated from his own pocket. Even in the 18th century, generals had to play stewards of their country's resources which were considered very limited, and this alone moderated the extent and length of campaigns. For the Revolutionaries, and for any future government that can lay total claim to the nation's resources (even the resources of future generations via debt), there is no question of stewardship, only of spending as much as you need to spend to produce as much military power as you can possibly produce for the sake of the 'war effort'. With the advent of capitalism, which meant debt-based economies, the French were advantageously positioned to be the first power to wage war 'on credit'.

### *The discovery of the skirmishing line and the divisional system.*

In a stroke of luck for the French, the very inferiority of discipline, which necessarily afflicted a rapidly assembled army of civilian soldiers, was accidentally transformed into a powerful tactic that would forever change combat formations.

At this time, remember, the normal way of engaging an enemy was to stand shoulder to shoulder, elbow to elbow, in strict rank and file, and to advance with utmost discipline, stopping along the way to fire in volleys. The conventional wisdom was to hold fire and ideally break the enemy line. Once he flees you have your victory.

The French were not disciplined enough to march in formation very well or very far even if they had had the nerve, which they did not. It was common for them to break formation, but the novel situation that arose—in these men who harbored such strong belief in their cause—was that they broke formation but *they did not flee*. Instead they ran to the nearest cover, or dropped to the ground, fanned out behind the nearest obstacle, and from there, either individually or in small groups, began to fire at will. The opponent, who would have had nothing in his playbook to account for this breach of all norms, was now standing out in the open and could be easily picked off by fire coming from all sorts of directions.

The same hedges and ditches that posed a serious challenge to traditional serried columns were perfect for the 'skirmishers'. The allied forces, for their part, had no target. Nor could they close on

the French, since they would simply run a little way to a new ditch and reload.

These new 'skirmishing tactics' did not prevent all embarrassment and the inferior discipline of the French did cost them dearly, but it taught them that the old paradigm was not always in their best interest.

In addition, there was the larger problem of maneuvering such a horde. This eventually led by necessity to the creation of semi-independent units which marked the transition to the 'divisional system' of military organization we know today, where the entire army is not under the control of a single commander. Each division cooperates but is capable of maneuvering independently from others, and ready to operate alone if needed.

### *Problems of supply.*

Another consequence of the sheer enormity of the army was the fact that it was impossible to supply it by any traditional means. As a result, the troops spent much of their time hungry (in some cases starving) and when they came into contact with towns they would not hesitate to loot and plunder. Even good men can be driven mad from hunger, and once the plundering starts, we should not be surprised to hear stories of shocking behavior.

Much like the advent of the skirmishing line, this very failure would be turned into an advantage, and the very absence of proper magazines and supply caches, even tents, would contribute to the speed of mobilization for which the French, especially under Napoleon, became famous.

### *The institutionalization of propaganda.*

Our separate section dedicated to the subject of propaganda covers various aspects of its technique, but in terms of its origin, we can say that the French Revolution and its efforts to compel its new mass armies to fight provide examples of pioneering propaganda projects. After all, the new soldiers were not motivated in the same way as previous recruits. Men who are not soldiers by profession require strong emotions in order to run to the battlefield and to allow themselves to be shot at and to shoot at others. The method used by the French to whip up their soldiers into a "frenzy" was described by the journalist Jacques Mallet du Pan as a "hellish tactic…worthy of

the monsters who had invented it." The French would subject their men to speeches and send women out into the crowd to distribute liquor and stir up the men so that "fifty thousand savage beasts, foaming at the mouth with rage and yelling like cannibals, hurl themselves at top speed upon soldiers whose courage has been excited by no passion."

Every degrading technique of manipulation leading to the large-scale 'manufacturing of consent' that goes on universally today springs naturally from this source, since the democratization of any institution must entail a switch away from intellectual and logical discourse to one that appeals to every man, even those least inclined to abstract thought, and this means fear, indignation, and an emphasis on moral extremes. Man's religious sense is inevitably hijacked in the process and every nation that must depend on propagandizing its people in order to function inevitably winds up creating a 'civil religion' in order to control the passions it evokes. As we have already pointed out, this blows every military effort out of all proportion since it must be framed in terms of absolute good and absolute evil.

### *Victory by transgression.*

It would be overly simplistic to write off Napoleon as a man who only won battles because he broke rules, but we would be naive to ignore the fact that some of his successes were accomplished by a lack of scruples, and there were times he won because he was willing to forgo the honorable path for the sake of victory, while his opponents often were not, and so they suffered the consequences of their principles.

The skirmishing tactics already mentioned were 'invented' in a similar manner, through acts that according to the conventional wisdom amounted to total failure or at least a breach of decorum. The men fled but did not flee completely and in abandoning 'the rules' they gained the upper hand through conduct that the enemy could not have anticipated. Systematic disregard for discipline was in some cases their greatest weapon.

Such was the case with Napoleon's second great victory, which he accomplished by

### *The lightning march and problems of supply.*

Another feat for which Napoleon was famous was the lightning march, which demonstrated the hardiness and enthusiasm of the French people but also Napoleon's willingness to test the limits of the human condition in an unprecedented way. In short, through feverish marching he was able to accomplish long wheeling maneuvers and to surprise his enemies who had never thought it possible (or perhaps just not reasonable) to push men in this way. One example of victory by this technique was the Ulm-Austerlitz Campaign, which is considered a masterpiece of strategy for more reasons than just his superior mobility.

Another reason Napoleon could accomplish these feats was through a disregard for problems of supply via the traditional magazines. Instead, Napoleon developed a new approach by which his army would simply go where they needed to go but with care to ensure that the area was already rich enough in resources for his army to 'live off the land'. One historian describes this new approach as distinct from what had been done in the previous century:

> "In the 17th and 18th centuries the military had evolved a supply system based on the amassing of supplies in magazines and fortifications augmented by purchases from civilian contractors who followed in the wake of every army. These supply systems were rudimentary at best, and it was not possible for any army to sustain itself at any distance from its magazines. This restriction led to a system of military operations that were carefully planned, long in advance, and supported by the accumulation of military supplies for months prior to the actual inception of the campaign. Once a war had begun, it was heavily influenced by supply considerations. There were no lightning maneuvers, troops marching hundreds of miles as was seen in the 1805 campaign. The wars of this period were like the jousting of turtles and seldom penetrated far into the country of either nation involved. These wars were primarily wars of maneuver where one army attempted to establish itself in the enemy's territory in a strong position…These wars resulted in a continual squabbling over border provinces that exchanged hands every few years.
>
> "When the French Revolution erupted, the French military establishment found itself undergoing a major revolution itself. The logistical administration and its supply system rapidly

> decayed, proving incapable of providing the logistical support required by the newly raised French armies. As a result, the French armies were frequently on the verge of starvation...By necessity they found themselves forced to fend for themselves, as their government had proven incapable of providing for them. What began initially as the simple pillaging of the countryside by starving soldiers rapidly evolved into a systematic requisitioning and amassing of supplies in a given area. A relatively sophisticated system evolved, where individual companies would detach 8 to 10 men under the direction of a corporal or a sergeant on a periodic basis. These squads operated independent of the main body for periods of a week or a day, collecting supplies and material necessary for sustaining their parent company. They would then return and distribute this material amongst their fellows...In the case of the French moving through conquered territory, there was seldom any remuneration. However, only rarely were provisions forcefully taken...
>
> "Though during the previous centuries armies had depended on magazines, starving armies had often moved through provinces, stripping them bare and wasting much of what they found. In contrast, the highly organized French system wasted little.
>
> "The French quickly became expert at estimating the ability of an area to support an army and developed skills in locating supplies in areas where other armies would have quickly starved if forced to live off the land. These skills had permitted the French to execute the massive maneuvers that gave them smashing victories in 1800, 1805, 1806, and 1809. It also led to the mystique that the French army could outmarch every other army in Europe. The ability to maneuver strategically had been seriously handicapped for years by the necessity to provide a wagon train for supplies...The French, lacking this military train and having the ability to live off the land they were traversing, were able to march as fast as their soldiers' legs could carry them, instead of at the pace of the oxen pulling the wagons."[5]

### *The object of war is a better peace.*

The object of war must always be to arrive at a *better peace*. This is a principle that many modern leaders have not understood, mostly

[5] Nafziger, *Napoleon's Invasion of Russia*, pp 83-85.

because peace is eclipsed entirely by the reality of total war since it frames the struggle as one for survival entailing nothing less than the total destruction of one side or the other. We will deal with the problems of modern diplomacy in a later section when we discuss just war and terrorism and the difficulty of categorizing modern participants in war. For now, we must only point out that Napoleon, like others of his time, failed to understand the nature of peace:

> "Neither he nor they saw that a true peace must be either one of reconciliation or one of destruction, since an unreconciled enemy still possessed of the power to strike will do so at the first opportunity. Especially he and they thought it clever to break the Eighteenth Century rules of war because they missed the secret of those rules, i.e. the moderation which alone can reconcile an undestroyed opponent to defeat. The world still suffers from this stupidity."[6]

The first example would be the peace France dictated to Prussia in 1806, a peace that stripped her of half of her territory and was so embittering that it could only be maintained by placing garrisons in the overrun territories.

One could, perhaps, forgive participants in *total war* for their failure in this regard. As we would see in the fallout of the first and second World Wars, after such an intense national exertion with such catastrophic losses, no one has the energy left to play the merciful victor who wins over his defeated enemy by showing lenience. Everyone feels like they have been victims of the most heinous crimes, and that is why today we treat the defeated like they are criminals, and we sue for damages in a global court of law, and we humiliate them even beyond the fact of their defeat, because we ourselves are so demoralized that there is no amount of suffering that would be enough to make us feel like justice has been done to our enemy.

In other words, total war makes reconciliation impossible, which necessitates totalitarian outcomes, which fuels hostility, works against liberty, and ensures that conflict will carry on indefinitely. Force deployed to subdue that does not completely decimate the enemy must remain in effect, even if the force is only used to a lesser degree. We see this in American foreign policy, which has become not so much a project of diplomacy and peace-making, but of

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[6] Hoffman Nickerson, *The Armed Horde*, p. 98.

manipulation, intervention, or varying degrees of the use of force to resist whatever the current government deems a threat, and since peace is not the result, but only so many partial victories, the energy and resources used to maintain the force, or the threat of force, are forever escalating.

*Victory as a political goal--we must proclaim it loud and clear--is not an end in itself. It is a means to a better peace. We confuse the means for the end.*

We realize that for Napoleon, who was the rare *natural soldier*, peace was not the objective because he would not have known what to do with peace even if he had have achieved it. We do not need to outline in any detail the slow exhaustion of the French nation leading to its eventual collapse. What is important to understand is that by adopting the methods and the mentality of mass war, the sacrifices it entails, there was no peace satisfying enough, no victory enriching enough, to sustain the machinery they had built, and which placed them at odds with the entire world. Accumulated resentment built up the resolve of her enemies and at Waterloo, the last French army went down.

### *Prussia as heir to the mass army.*

One would think that after observing the plight of the French, with their inability to cage the monster they had unleashed and which consumed them in the end, that Europe would have seen all it needed to see in order to bring about a return to limited war. One would be mistaken. Prussia would take up Napoleon's mantle, not in many respects, but certainly with regard to the maintenance and perfection of the mass army. Thus King William I could declare in 1860: "Henceforward the Prussian army will be the Prussian nation in arms."

Thus, the peace of 1815 was followed not so much by disgust at the machinery of war, but by Prussia as an opportunity to pursue its perfection, and even to amplify it. We should stress that what is profound in this development is that it makes permanent what for France had been created in a 'moment of passion' and for perceived military needs.

> "Prussian motives for not only perpetuating but systematizing such an appalling monster as the armed horde were mixed. First, universal compulsion is the cheapest way to get a large

> army. Compared to the other great powers of 1815 Prussia was poor…besides being poor she was both ambitious and afraid. Ambition had been her reason for being; she had grown great by successful conquests. At the same time she knew herself to be disliked, and in the West she had a difficult strategic situation…How far she was merely ambitious and how far honestly afraid need not here be argued. Suffice it that she desired the greatest armed strength her comparative poverty could command."[7]

Today we might struggle to understand how much emphasis the 19th century had placed on quantity, on numbers as the determining factor in military strength, since today an equally important factor is technology. Technology depends largely on wealth, and so the pursuit of wealth and resources for the maintenance of technological supremacy is a primary concern. But post-Revolutionary Prussia was an age of quantity only, based on the lessons of Napoleon. Even when Napoleon had to fight with inferior numbers in total, he won by concentrating more men at certain strategic points, such that the victory was still a quantity of overwhelming numbers.

Perhaps we can summarize the transformation that took place in Prussia at this time by saying that Prussia, which was a nation far from 'democratic' in temperament, had begun, out of necessity, to think democratically. They imitated, by necessity (so they thought), the techniques of those they had previously despised. Everything follows from this, and the chief accomplishment of Prussia was to coolly and objectively nurture the type of society that the French had produced out of an ideological fit.

As to how the institution would be structured, there were several possibilities. One option would be the sort of universal militia wherein all would be called up periodically for training after the model of the Swiss, but the problem with this model is that decisions in war must be popular in order to have the support of the soldiers, since the soldiers are the people in general and tend only to fight for causes they believe in. An unpopular government will struggle to utilize a militia-based army. A second problem is that militia armies cannot generally withstand confrontation with a sophisticated professional army, and this is no surprise since here it is a question of 'part-timers' versus professionals. Due to these issues of control and competence, the Prussians adopted a mix of a large professional

[7] Hoffman Nickerson, *The Armed Horde*, pp. 132-133.

'regular' military force with militia units called the *landwehr* acting as reservists, but with the idea that they would not actually form organizational units of their own when called into battle but would be reinforcements for incorporation into the regulars.

### *Nationalism and the Napoleons of business.*

Other transformations also followed the revolutionary period and would not be without impact on the future of war. The first of these was the abolition of old social distinctions, which taught the commercial middle class man that he was equal to his betters, and had every right to go head to head with them in his pursuits. Ironically, the kind of freedom that was pursued was the freedom to make money, and in the end through competition and the victory of a few competent "Napoleons of business" the end result was to be proletarianism--the reduction of almost the whole population to the status of wage earners under a new ruling class of business men and financiers. A new aristocracy would quickly replace the old.

Add to this a new kind of collective identity or awareness of unity, called nationalism and expressed through the sentiment of patriotism. Consider that the old view of government authority was simply an acknowledgement that *someone* must rule, and that this *someone* was the nobility, since they, through breeding and competence, were most suited to the task, and not necessarily because they were gifted special sovereignty by the people via any kind of high theory. The *ancien regime* was organic, practical, and realist, and each of these characteristics is *limiting* with regard to how romantic people could be about it.

The new dispensation wherein governments are "of the people, by the people, for the people" were combined with theories about the bestowal (from below, not from above) of sovereignty by an imagined "social contract" (a contract that carried with it an obligation more binding than the fact of being born within this or that Baron's domain), created an entirely new order of sovereignty. This new order was more abstract but also more personal, and had the strange effect of creating an identification between the lowest individual and the apparatus of power which no king could have ever convinced the lowest peasant to adopt. The result was the belief in a new and more absolute sovereignty, one said to be 'of the people', conceived as a noble auto-sovereignty, the rule of the self, but since this is truly impossible, the new attitude ends up gifting an

unbelievably degree of power to whatever actors manage this new machinery of law and war.

What followed was a new level of servility combined with a new religion of the state. This worship of the state-deity and its priests, who themselves were managed by the masters of business, taught men to praise power while thinking they were praising themselves.

The patriot grovels before his symbols and rushes out to die on whatever battlefield he is pointed toward by the managers of the media. He is subject to a feverish passion that could not have afflicted anyone in the feudal world, at any level. Patriotism of this religiously oppressive sort still survives to this day.

### *Carl von Clausewitz and the golden age of military theory.*

Peacetime, for the professional soldier, is tiresome since it reduces his vocation to playing pretend, drilling with unloaded weapons, and trying to motivate and edify oneself on the basis of memories of previous battles. Even these memories recede into the background and become more a matter of imagination than of experience. But for those of an intellectual predisposition, peace means time to think, and especially after an episode of upheaval so profound as the Napoleonic wars, with so much fodder for analysis, peacetime provided an excellent opportunity for the development of military theory.

Here we finally meet the great Carl von Clausewitz, whose work would provide the foundation for analysis for the next two hundred years. He was the very picture of the professional soldier, seeing his first active service as a cadet at the age of thirteen (1793) until Waterloo, even volunteering in the Russian army from 1812-1814. He died in 1831, an early death that left his magnum opus incomplete, but *On War* was complete enough to become perhaps the most widely recognized classic on military theory after the much more ancient *Art of War* by Sun Tzu.

Much of Clausewitz's work is unassailable and precise, almost beyond criticism. He takes as his point of departure the duel, and says that war is a duel on the grandest scale, and is known for defining war as the continuation of state policy (politics) by other means, and that it is essentially the application of organized force in order to make good some point of policy:

> "We see, therefore, that War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means. All beyond this which is strictly peculiar to War relates merely to the peculiar nature of the means which it uses. That the tendencies and views of policy shall not be incompatible with these means, the Art of War in general and the Commander in each particular case may demand, and this claim is truly not a trifling one. But however powerfully this may react on political views in particular cases, still it must always be regarded as only a modification of them; for the political view is the object, War is the means, and the means must always include the object in our conception."

After his introductory discussion, he proposes a classification of wars into 'limited' and 'unlimited':

> "The two kinds of wars are, first, those in which the object is the overthrow of the enemy, whether it be that we aim at his political destruction, or merely at disarming him and forcing him to conclude peace on our terms. Secondly, those in which our object is merely to make some conquests on the frontiers of his country. Transitions from one kind to the other must certainly continue; yet the divergent natures of the two are apparent."

Obviously the latter type of war is *limited* in the sense that our opponent need not be completely destroyed or conquered in order to obtain the objective, which might involve a simple border dispute. The classifications do overlap and Clausewitz is not so naive as to think that this division is black and white, but rather there is a spectrum and conflicts continuously fluctuate from one end to the other.

Beyond this point we do find issues with the framing of certain questions. For example, it seems that Clausewitz had not fully comprehended the shift in political movements away from leadership and into the domain of popular passions brought about by democracy, since he makes the lists three objects of war in this order:

> "(a) to conquer and destroy the enemy's organized forces; (b) to seize his material resources; and (c) to gain public opinion."

From where we stand today we can see that the third objective is perhaps actually the first, and the only one that might matter in some cases. Another issue here is the distinction between the *military* destruction of an enemy's forces and their *real* destruction. What we mean is that military destruction occurs when the enemy forces no longer pose a threat, and this may or may not involve their *actual* destruction. An enemy who is incapacitated or demoralized might surrender or become unable to fight without having been completely overrun. Clausewitz certainly must have understood this, but he saw *actual* destruction as the normal route to victory and practically ignored the less extreme possibility. Here we find the first example of a larger problem with Clausewitz, which is not that he is wrong in his logic but that he is problematic in his emphasis. He tends to spurn victory by skill and speaks almost exclusively of victory by escalation to the extreme. We will see what kind of havoc this wreaks and to what dead end it eventually leads the world.

A similar problem is encountered in his chapter on "The Magnitude Of The Object Of The War And The Efforts To Be Made", which examines the relationship between the goal of the conflict and how much effort we are willing to expend in order to achieve it. He points out that by the laws of escalation it is easy to lose sight of what the object of a particular war is worth in terms of lives and resources. Both sides trying to strike quickly and with enough force to end the conflict decisively, knowing what the opponent also has at his disposal, will use the maximum required in order not to cause the 'positive harm' of using too little force, and "This might lead to the utmost extremity of exertion…But then regard for the amount of the political demands would be lost, the means would lose all relation to the end, and in most cases this aim at an extreme effort would be wrecked by the opposing weight of forces within itself."

All of that is good counsel, but he seems to proceed throughout much of the rest of his argument as if he had not said it, or perhaps, rather, he had the foresight to know that however much he had developed that side of things, the result would be "violence pushed to its utmost bounds," and so he committed himself to the latter. Regardless, in the remainder of his work we find a straight line to escalation and hostility: "Only great general actions can give great results." "The more war is in earnest, the more it is a venting of animosity and hostility". And so on. He seems to have been, not so much appalled by the techniques of Napoleon, but rather intent on refining them, wishing to encourage 'combative emotion' in every

way possible and to concentrate all available forces to the extreme limit.

In the view of Hoffman Nickerson,

> "Never does he seem to see that victory might be too dearly bought. He is content to say: "He who uses force unsparingly, without reference to the bloodshed involved, must obtain a superiority if his adversary uses less vigor in its application." Even in his passage on excessive effort he seems not to have asked himself what would happen if two fairly equal opponents strained every nerve to raise the largest possible armies and if the war were prolonged…At all events he did not sufficiently dwell on the proverb "two can play at that game"."[8]

Here again, as mentioned above, we find an almost total absence of Sherman's essential wisdom, that "the legitimate end of war is a more perfect peace." Neither the Revolutionaries, nor Napoleon himself, nor the Prussians after him, nor even our leaders today understand what this means, and what the consequences are to the pursuit of war without regard to *a better peace* that must come after in order to be able to justify the sacrifice.

Perhaps the best and worst thing we can say about Clausewitz is that for him, Napoleon was an idol, and this idolatry is responsible for the best and worst in *On War*, the worst being the creation of a trend that would culminate in a veritable "cult of the offensive" expressed through the common maxim that "the best defense is a good offense". The consequences of maximum force and the superiority of the offensive would be shown before the whole world at the beginning of the twentieth century, and after, and it would take millions of lives to undo this unbalanced education.

### *A few technological developments.*

At about this time in our narrative it is important to pause to observe not the politics and the theory that surround war, but also technological development that grows up parallel to it and will inevitably be enlisted into its projects.

In terms of communication, we see the revolution of speed brought about by the telegraph. In transportation, the discovery of steam meant not only steam engines and rail transport but also steam

[8] Nickerson, *The Armed Horde*, p. 143.

*ships*, which did not immediately supersede sailing but quickly began to count for something.

Some technological developments do relate directly to war, and in some cases it is not so much a matter of 'new discovery' but of the advance of technology and product to such a point that the technology, which might have been known for some time, is readily available for deployment in war. Such was the case with rifled firearms. As early as 1742, the Englishman Benjamin Robins could predict that "whatever State shall thoroughly comprehend the nature and advantage of rifled barrel pieces, and having facilitated and completed their construction, shall introduce into their armies their general use, with a dexterity in the management of them, will by this means acquire a superiority which will almost equal anything that has been done at any time by the particular excellence of any one kind of arms, and will perhaps fall but little short of the wonderful effect which historians relate to have been formerly produced by the first invention of firearms."

Robins makes an interesting point, not to be overlooked. It is the fact that even the mere *improvement* of a lethal technology can have an effect similar to the initial introduction of that technology, and this results in an almost exponential increase in the potential for violence as arms are improved.

Smoothbore muskets were hardly effective at a hundred yards, and even at closer ranges their inaccuracy required persistent firing. There is good reason that during the American Revolution casualties on the field were no more than 2-3 per minute, which is astonishing given the number of shots being fired. With the introduction (due to availability) of rifled muskets, the effective range was extended to two hundred yards, and only at this point can we speak of 'sniping' in the modern sense. The initial problems of implementation were overcome by the mid-Nineteenth Century with the development of bullets formed with a conical hollow in the base and a point at the tip, which would be expanded by the explosion of powder and forced to take the rifling grooves in barrel.

In addition to a more lethal infantry, the introduction of rifled artillery would follow to replace the common 'twelve pounder', with its smoothbore and eleven hundred yard limit, extending artillery range to more than double the previous, up to twenty six hundred yards.

### *Problems for the offensive.*

As we observe the improvement of firearms we see the first problem with the theoretical 'cult of the offensive', whose adherents did not adequately foresee that all of these technological victories inevitably undermined their mentality because they strengthened the *defensive* first and foremost. Rifles as the standard for infantry meant increased range, which made the space that the attacker must close in order to overrun the enemy, which traditionally was not all that far, into the vast 'no man's land' of trench warfare that we would encounter in the world wars. In other words, these developments would end by creating a stalemate or a wholesale slaughter of the attacking side, and while the former was the norm, the latter was chosen in extreme cases like the assault on the beaches of Normandy.

### *The American Civil War.*

The Civil War is famous for its moral and legal motivations, which involved both the right of states to support slavery and the right of states to secede from the union. When the dust settled, both questions were decided in the negative.

It is not our purpose in this section to analyze any of the political and legal questions involved, but some comment is instructive for our point of view, which is ultimately to find out what this war has to teach us about the technique of war and its disturbing extension to include entire populations in its operation. In this regard, the Civil War is fertile ground for study.

Politically we can draw interesting parallels between the Civil War and the French Revolution, since both involved the use of media to fuel popular passions resulting in the gathering together of massive armies facing each other in battlefield deadlock to the point of the socioeconomic exhaustion of the entire people.

We have remarked elsewhere that the Civil War was the last real 'culture war' in America, despite the rhetoric about such things today, since during the 19th century north and south were truly different cultures whose relationship was characterized not by a common way of life but by exchange of goods from two separate economies. Due to this fairly clean geographical distinction, the American Civil War was not nearly so complex as many other civil wars and the combatants resembled separate countries more than separate parties in the context of a single government where the

members of both sides come from all different places without a clean regional division.

Again, we do not intend to detail the nature of the conflict or the arguments put forth by either side (which are far more reasonable and grounded than most people care to acknowledge), but we can say that popular passions combined with available resources are what determined the extent of the conflict, and the north was in some cases (such as that of John Brown) fanatically opposed to southern slavery, and likewise there were men of the old school aristocratic south who would fight to the last for their belief in what they deemed to be well-ordered Christian principles.

Of the two belligerents, the North was much wealthier in both money and men. Compared to the twenty million in the North, the South could only draw from a population of about five and a half million plus the three million slaves.

Also key in our understanding of events, especially regarding what we've said about technological advance, is that the North's objective required a successful *offensive*, in order to overcome and reclaim territories that had tried to secede, while the South was on the *defensive*.

We could preempt things by pointing out that in the end the war was decided by the Union navy, including steam powered ships, which was from the beginning far superior to the 'improvised' navy of the Confederacy. The former were able to establish an effective blockade, and it was this blockade against the South that was their undoing, driving them into starvation and impoverishment. This was decisive because the South, being agricultural, had lived by trade for foreign materials. It only acquired metals and finished goods by exporting its tobacco and cotton. The South was therefore inhibited by the blockade almost, as we have said, from the very beginning. As only one example of the resulting disadvantage, we know that the North imported nearly seven hundred thousand firearms in the first year, while the South only managed to procure less than two hundred thousand and in twice that amount of time. Some Confederate soldiers, for this very reason, were given flintlock smoothbore rifles of days gone by, while others were issued no rifle at all. Nor was this lack of resources limited to military goods. At one point it is recorded that three thousand men forming one army corps were barefoot.

Regarding the size of the respective forces, the North was able to bring nearly 3 million men to the field for its Army, which is quite shocking when we realize that this is more men than there were in the entirety of the Southern territories (if we exclude slaves), since the total white population in the South was only 5.5 million. Of that pool of recruits, the Confederate army was only ever able to bring 1.2 million to the field, many of them boys and old men.

### *The blockade as the precursor to war on noncombatants.*

Because the blockade was so relentless and so effective, it is worth noting that it was also somewhat novel as a strategy of total war aimed at an entire enemy population. Only during very limited instances of siege warfare, when a certain city or fortress might be trapped and starved into submission, was this kind of suffering inflicted for military purposes. Here, however, it was the entire South held in such a state until the day of surrender.

> "The cold savagery of blockading an entire country needs no argument--all the more because its effects, less dramatic than those of battles, do not so strike the imagination both of contemporaries and of historians. Blockade is a weapon directed more against civilians than against fighting men, and most of all against the weak, children, old people, the poor, and the sick."[9]

It was put in clearest terms by General Sherman:

> "We are not only fighting hostile armies but a hostile people, and must make old and young, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war…If the people raise a howl against my barbarity and cruelty, I will answer that war is war…If they want peace they and their relatives must stop the war."[10]

Total war is normal today and so we justify these tactics in various ways, because that is what we've been trained to do. Men will borrow Sherman's rationale precisely, to be used again and again whenever it is strategically advantageous to burn and butcher civilians in order to undermine the enemy's power.

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[9] Hoffman Nickerson, *The Armed Horde*, p. 158.
[10] William Sherman, *Letter to Henry Halleck*, dated December 24, 1864.

### *The specter of trench warfare emerges.*

By now the skirmishing line 'discovered' by the French was the only reasonable approach to infantry confrontation. Cavalry charges were suicide unless directed against other cavalry. The presentation of almost any target was unwise given the established fact of rifled firearms.

The problem now was that it became difficult and sometimes impossible to close the now significant gap between oneself and the enemy. This meant prolonged combat at mid-range where soldiers were within reach of rifles but not close enough to charge. Once 'pinned down' for any amount of time, the obvious solution is to dig oneself in wherever one happens to be planted. And this is precisely what both sides began to do, and so was born the tactic of entrenchment that would become the hallmark of the first world war, but was 'discovered' in the United States. On both sides, North and South, trench works were significant projects and sometimes even included wire entanglements.

It is no exaggeration to say this revolutionized the battlefield, and as with every revolution there are unforeseen consequences, the first of them, in this case, being the exponential increase in consumption of ammunition. Of this situation one witness wrote:

> "I had taken part in two great battles, and heard the bullets whistle both days, and yet I had scarcely seen a Rebel save killed, wounded or prisoner...The great art is to conceal men ; for the moment they show, *bang, bang*, go a dozen cannon, the artillerists only too pleased to get a fair mark."[11]

This does not mean that bloodshed was decreased merely by the penchant for digging and the practice of firing madly in the direction of the enemy. Both sides ran up unbelievable butcher's bills through the conflict. The sacrifices required for this style of war are shown in reports that to take a position, the attacking side had to have a superiority of three to one.

John Codman Ropes wrote of,

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[11] Colonel Theodore Lyman, *With Grant and Meade from the Wilderness to Appomattox*, p. 101.

> "terribly bloody battles, its encounters of every day…the noble trees cut down by musket balls…the thousands upon thousands of brave men slain and maimed, and, above all, the indecisive results, amaze, terrify, repel, dishearten us…"

And what he says next could only be said with even more truth of the great war that would follow:

> "Sacrifices were demanded every day of the rank and file of the army which had hitherto been required only occasionally, and then only from those selected for some special post of honor or danger…To lie in a new-dug rifle-pit a hundred yards from the enemy for several days under constant fire is much like the experience of the engineer troops in a siege. To rush from the rifle-pit upon the enemy's works is the act of a forlorn hope, whose gallant performance is the admiration of a storming column, itself selected for a special and dangerous service. But it is not every day that the sap is pushed forward or the breach assaulted."

### *Closing remarks on the Civil War.*

Similarities between the Civil War and the French Revolution are easy to see. Both were starkly different in rhetoric and motivation from the older bouts between princes over specific and limited objectives. Instead the recruits went to war for 'the rights of man' and 'human dignity' and 'equality'. Both involved mass armies and mass slaughter, and propaganda to keep the stream of recruits flowing (more for the North than the South).

Two more characteristics of the Civil War warrant mention but do not require lengthy explanation. Here too we see the continuation of certain novelties first introduced by the French. First, the financing of war through debt, which the North carried to great lengths. In 1860, before secession, the government debt was $64 million. By 1865, in four years, it had multiplied to 40 times that amount, and when the conflict came to a close the debt was at $2.6 billion. So severe was the need for more money that the National Bank Act was passed in 1863 and created the nationwide banking system that would in turn *loan money to the government to pay for its war*. The consequences of this relationship are so significant that it would be impossible to do them justice here, but it gave the financiers an unprecedented power in government affairs, according to the dictum "the borrower is slave to the lender".

Second, the impossibility of compromise, for since the conflict was between ‘good and evil’ then no settlement was possible, and since for the south this was a denial of ‘their very way of life’ it followed that they could not be defeated until completely disarmed or destroyed.

# THE AGE OF WORLD WARS

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***World War I and the culmination of mass war.***

The reader will be disappointed to discover that by the time we reach the First World War, there is not much left to say. Everything explains itself according to the developments outlined above.

Every nation, either through necessity or ambition, maintains permanently on foot as large a force as it can afford, and has legally adopted the institution of conscription. The military is therefore democratized.

First we can observe the lack of experience on all sides. The armies fielded for World War I were *green,* and while armies always have new recruits in their ranks what is important to understand is that mass armies that resort to conscription will be green to the extreme, and contrary to what we might think, this has advantages. They are capable of great exertions due to their naive enthusiasm (carefully fueled by the powers that be) and can be pushed in a way that the realist long service regulars cannot. This would become important in the context of trench warfare where the nerves inevitably fray and it is more a question of 'fresh blood' than experienced minds.

This style of escalation and the motivations on display in recent conflicts and the tragedy that follows every confrontation keep each nation in fear of its neighbors. All it took was a single angry young man to set a world conflict in motion, so unstable were its relations, bringing to the fore the *absence of peace* that prevails even in peacetime in the modern age of mass armies.

Theory and observation had taught commanders that a fortified front was nearly impenetrable due to advances in weapons. Gone was the Napoleonic strategy of focusing large numbers on a key point in order to 'pierce' the front, until of course the arrival of new beasts that would replace the elephants of old: the tanks.

> "They were huge, primitive, and horribly uncomfortable vehicles. The eight-man crew, stripped to their waists in the hundred degree heat, shared the interior with an exposed 105-

> horsepower Daimler engine. The fumes from the engine and from hot shell cases rolling around on the floor made the atmosphere inside almost unbreathable in combat. There were no springs in the suspension, the noise made voice communications impossible, and it was hard to see hand signals in the semi-darkness, as the only light came through the vision slits. The tanks' top speed was only three and a half miles an hour, and they broke down on average every five or ten miles."[1]

These were not perfected until the Second World War but they played a terrifying role in the First, even if they could not truly break the stalemate. Thanks to Napoleon's example and Clausewitz's thinking, soldiers had not yet learned the lesson that war at mass scale could never lead to a 'quick decision', and it seemed that no one imagined how long the affair could be drawn out. Key players were planning on reaching a decision within six months, and were dismayed when it did not come, and they had nothing in their repertoire to explain their situation because they had not taken seriously the outcomes of the American Civil War. Only one European seems to have adequately absorbed its lesson, namely J.S. Bloch, writing in 1897:

Most of Europe did not take lessons from the American Civil War, although one notable writer, Jan Gotlib Bloch, saw what was coming:[2]

> "When we say that war is impossible we mean that it is impossible for the modern state to carry on war under modern conditions with any prospect of...a conclusion by defeating its adversary...on the battlefield. No decisive war is possible. Neither is any war possible...that will not entail, even on the victory...the destruction of his resources and the breakup of society. War has become impossible except at the price of suicide."
>
> "At first there will be increased slaughter...on so terrible a scale as to render it impossible to get troops to push the battle to a decisive issue. They will try to, thinking that they are fighting under the old conditions, and they will learn such a lesson that they will abandon the attempt forever. Then, instead of a war

[1] Gwynne Dyer, *War*, p. 268.

[2] Selections are from Bloch's six volume master work titled *Is War Now Impossible?*.

> fought out to the bitter end in a series of decisive battles, we shall have…a long period of continually increasing strain upon the resources of the combatants. The war, instead of being a hand to hand contest in which the combatants measure their physical and moral superiority, will become a kind of stalemate, in which neither army being able to get at the other, both…will be maintained in opposition to each other, but never being able to deliver a final and decisive attack…That is the future of war—not fighting, but famine, not the slaying of men, but the bankruptcy of nations and the break-up of the whole social organization."

Nor did he miss on the problem of entrenchment:

> "Certainly, everybody will be entrenched in the next war. It will be a great war of entrenchments. The spade will be as indispensable to a soldier as his rifle. The first thing every man will have to do, if he cares for…life at all, will be to dig a hole in the ground, and throw up as strong an earthen rampart as he can to shield him from the hail of bullets which will fill the air…Battles will last…for days, and at the end it is very doubtful whether any decisive victory can be gained."

Bloch's foresight seems almost superhuman, but he was wrong on his share of other points. In a rational age perhaps he'd have had a following, but the age of rationalism had passed and the democratic era begun, and begun with vigor. Men went to the trenches singing when the state called, and there was nothing the obscure Jewish banker could say to stop it.

Like the civil war, the decision would be by starvation and the men at the front would suffer the extremes of combat but the young and old, the women and children, would starve with them as civilization was, in a sense, put on pause in order to focus all resources on a victory that could never occur.

In the end, total war is decided by total exhaustion of one or more key nations while generalship has been reduced, far more than in the day of Napoleon, to the act of clubbing one's enemy to death.

The importance of strategy was reduced by the 'quantity over quality' reality of the armed horde, but with technological advance, even quantity receded into the background and conflicts were slowly becoming a testing ground for technological innovation and would

be decided by whomever could establish technological superiority. WWI introduced the machine gun and barbed wire. We see naive justifications for terrible experiments with weapons like poison gas, which in the end increased casualties but did not achieve any strategic objective (we will discuss this problem below).

### *The continuous front and the invention of the home front.*

Everything went as planned for the world's modern armies in terms of their rapid mobilization, as modern states performed veritable miracles of organization and deployment. Each went enthusiastically to work with their Napoleonic mindset and within sixty days the frenzy had ground to a halt. Reality, always a hard teacher, had arrived to disabuse the world of its optimism. Man would now experience the consequences of his technological victories, cowering in waist deep mud from the powerful weapons he had called into service in his favor. By Christmas that first year, less than six months into the war, a million were already dead.

Remember that tactics had previously involved either massing troops to focus on a strategic point, or else flanking around the lines in order to defeat an enemy. We have already detailed the impossibility of the frontal assault, but what battlefield commanders discovered now was that when they tried to out flank the opponent's trenches, they would meet and new trenches would appear. They could move further, laterally, but the enemy trenches would simply extend.

> "Suddenly there were no more enemy flanks that you could hope to get around, just an endless front line. It was theoretically possible to walk 475 miles from the English Channel to the border of neutral Switzerland along either of two parallel lines of trench, sometimes as close as ten or twenty yards apart (more usually several hundred), without ever setting foot on the surface."[3]

If the lines could not move, they could still be bombarded, and they were, day in and day out. Artillery would in fact become the decisive instrument in this kind of *position warfare*. This created new conditions not just on the battlefield, but at home as well, since it meant that whereas previously the emphasis had been placed on the

[3] Gwynne Dyer, *War*, p. 252.

soldiers personally located in the field, now the *industrial production* of weapons and ammunition would be equally decisive. By 1915 French factories were churning out 200,000 shells a day and still struggling to keep up with demand. Russian shell production reached 4.5 million units per month and, just like France, could not satisfy the demand.

In order to avoid being pulverized, the lines were driven to become even more dispersed, thus making the problem worse. The extent of the front line would henceforth only be limited mathematically by the measure of the surface distance a single soldier could cover, multiplied by the many millions of soldiers the nations would put on the field. The result was not just a deadlocked front, but a continuous deadlocked front. As in France, so also in other countries involved, from Russia to Palestine.

To this we can add the psychological trial brought on by an unavoidable sense of futility. The machine gun combined with wire entanglements meant that no successful offensive could occur, and between October 1914 and March of 1918 no attack managed to move the Western front more than ten miles. Life in this deadlock is well described in the war diaries that have been published since, most notably Ernst Junger's *Storm of Steel*. What we begin to understand from Junger's description is the psychological impact of artillery on the front lines combined with the conditions endured there.

### *Hello home front, goodbye non-combatant.*

Here we see the first uses of the term 'home front', indicative of the transformation of war. Since the work of the civilian in the munitions factory was perhaps just as important as the work of the soldier using the munitions, it seemed logical to speak as if all areas of production were so many extensions of the 'front', and since total war incorporated all areas of social life into its effort, the front likewise encompassed everything and everything. *Everything was the front, even the home.*

Nor was there any argument for traditionally excluded segments of the population to be excused, in this case *women*, since they were herded into factories to take over for absent male laborers. The institution of conscription had achieved a fundamentally new *extent*, now laying claim not just to the husbands and sons, but now to the wives as well.

War is called irrational but it is also brutally rational. It took no time at all to follow the above logic to the conclusion that civilian targets were not legitimate military targets, or to put it another way, anything was a military target that was within the bounds of enemy territory. We can cite a letter from a German soldier:

> "We who strike the enemy where his heart beats have been slandered as 'baby-killers' and 'murderers of women'...What we do is repugnant to us too, but necessary. Very necessary. Nowadays there is no such animal as a non-combatant; modern warfare is total warfare. A soldier cannot function at the front without the factory worker, the farmer and all the other providers behind him. You and I, Mother, have discussed this subject, and I know you understand what I say. My men are brave and honourable. Their cause is holy, so how can they sin while doing their duty? If what we do is frightful, then may frightfulness be Germy's salvation."

We could easily replace the word 'frightfulness' with 'terrorism' and arrive at a slightly more modern enunciation of this idea. His logic is precisely the same logic enunciated by General Sherman in the Civil War, and it is the same logic that would justify Dresden and Hiroshima. There are no scruples in total war. We do what we think we must do to survive, and if that is our motivation, how could we possibly be guilty of any sin?

### *World War I by the numbers.*

We cannot close without providing minimal data on the scale of the military forces involved. Armies were unprecedented in size, and this should not shock us in the slightest. To take the example of Russia alone, they had 1.4 million men *in the beginning* and when fully mobilized they had almost 5 million men at their disposal. As was the case in the American Civil War, many lacked even the basic necessities of combat, such as a weapon.

As for casualties, estimates have come to about 40 million. Half of these being actual deaths and the other half accounting for the wounded. This, again, should not shock us, since it follows the logic we have established.

What *should* shock us, however, is that of the 20 million deaths, half were civilians. Thus, we see that at the height of Western democracy and 'civilization' war was the bloodiest that it has ever been

anywhere in the history of the earth, but with the added difference that now, as never before, civilians are apparently *just as likely to die as those directly involved in the combat*.

The art of war was modified such that the *superior minds* of generals (like Napoleon) were overshadowed by *superior numbers*, and eventually even the size of armies ceased to matter so much as the superiority of the clubs they were carrying. Battle becomes a contest of who can strike with greater technological precision, with greater effect, and from greater distance. The significance of artillery could be an example and a metaphor for the transformation of war into an indiscriminate pummeling match. In World War II a new question would be added to the equation, which would be: who is willing to strike anyone and everyone to try and force a result, and will killing civilians actually bring an enemy to his knees? This will represent perhaps the final rung on the descending ladder since now it is not a question of superiority of the club, but of whether or not we are willing to use our superior club to pulverize tens of thousands of women and children in their beds. The descent into the crudest barbarism will then be complete.

### *Respect for the conquered.*

When the Great War came to a close, the terms for Germany were very much like an *unconditional surrender*. They gave up their submarines and land equipment. A prudent conquest means setting oneself up for a better peace, and as we have already said, without a better peace there is no real victory. But given the strain of such a conflict and the fact that some of the victors were in no better position than the defeated, wisdom gave way to the desire for punishment, for retribution.

To quote Nickerson again:

> "In defiance of the Eighteenth Century principle of respecting a conquered enemy's conscience as if it were one's own, the treaty of Versailles contained a 'War Guilt clause.' Article 231 said in part: '…Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her Allies for…all the loss and damage to which the Allied and the Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her Allies."

Obviously no self-respecting nation would accept these terms with sincerity, they do no more than sow resentment. We need only refer to the principle that we have discussed elsewhere, that politics and political actions, war included, cannot coerce a mental result. If reparations are in order, and are possible, they might be demanded, but to demand the acceptance of guilt is not only imprudent and vindictive, it is impossible. It only forces the defeated party to lie, adding 'insult to injury'.

### *The League of Nations and the illusion of moral authority.*

At some point Europe begins to long for that moral unity that was the blessing of Christendom, not so much out of a love for the good, but out of horror at the enmity that is the consequence of its absence. We all sense that we need this but our philosophy of life since the Enlightenment forbids us from actually verbalizing it since we have glorified individualism and the right of each to go his own way. The very idea of submission to any kind of moderating body is insulting, and those who propose them are called weak, naive, etc. Perhaps they are, since it is truly naive to imagine that you could put in place a secular organization to fill what is essentially a function of religion. But the opponents of such ideas are merely naive in a different way, naive in the atheistic sense, believing that meaningful social relations are possibly without love for the good.

In a global attempt to avoid seeing this *religious* problem, it was decided that it was rather a problem of nationalism. In other words it was decided to treat the symptoms and to ignore the disease. To cure this nationalism, a supra-national authority called the League of Nations was set up at Versailles. Seen from the beginning by many as a joke, it was treated as such for most of its existence and, much like the analogous bodies that would later replace it (such as the United Nations or "UN") it was obeyed only insofar as it was convenient and even those who argued most strongly in its favor, namely the United States, tended to see it as a 'good for thee but not for me' instrument that could be used against enemies but could never be allowed to interfere with the pursuit of one's own national advantage.

Nor could anyone really have the kind of respect for this body that was needed in order for it to have the necessary moral influence. The Catholic Church wielded incredible authority because it was the closest thing to an absolute moral authority that the world could

ever have. The Church was literally the voice of God on Earth and this was a voice that men were willing to fight and die to preserve. No one was willing to die for the admonitions of the League of Nations. Even in practice the League had neither moral nor physical force at its disposal, so that it could supplement with arms what it lacked in moral gravity.

Nationalism would continue on as the sham 'moral unity' of the various peoples all over the globe. This is undoubtedly dangerous, because purely political and worldly, way of operating. The world arrived at this precarious place because it *ejected from political considerations the entire sphere of reality from which true moral unity can be derived*. The only way to recover this ground would be for politics to open itself once again to the dictates of God, which at this point is unlikely. Thus, even when the League failed, other counterfeits would replace it, serving more or less as instruments of manipulation and hypocrisy, and although it is certain there will be successes along the way, it is doubtful that these bodies are responsible for them. Who now would credit the League of Nations with the maintenance of the peaceful interim between wars, since it was clearly helpless to prevent the next outbreak? Such organizations survive by appealing to secular yearnings and humanitarian ideals, and spend much of their time powerlessly policing the poorest nations in the world who may or may not benefit from their help and in the end indifferently accept whatever aid is given before going about their business, while the First World, the real threat to the world as a whole, does not need its aid and never suffers any global policemen.

### *Growth of war means the growth of state power.*

At this point it will be good to recall a principle we've enunciated elsewhere, which is that the growth of state power is proportional to the growth of war. Unprecedented war suggests unprecedented power of the state. There is no way around it.

We are flattering ourselves by calling ourselves the most free of all people in history. Rather, we are the most docile and superficial, susceptible to flattery and self-delusion and so long as we are relatively comfortable, we would not have our delusion interrupted. We find it easy to imagine ourselves as the freest people in all of history mostly because we believe virtually anything we are told.

The actual trajectory of history is more in line with Bertrand de Jouvenel's thesis:

> "From the 12th to the 18th century government authority grew continuously. The process was understood by all who saw it happening; it stirred them to incessant protest and to violent reaction. In later times its growth has continued at an accelerated pace…And now we no longer understand the process, we no longer protest, we no longer react. This quiescence of ours is a new thing, for which Power has to thank the smoke-screen in which it has wrapped itself. Formerly it could be seen, manifest in the person of the king, who did not disclaim being the master he was…Now, masked in anonymity, it claims to have no existence of its own, and to be but the impersonal and passionless instrument of the general will."[4]

His thesis is proven by virtually any concrete, objective measure. Let us, for example, adopt an equation and say that to determine the extent of power we can divide the resources at power's disposal by the total resources inherent in society. These resources might be material, they might be human, but the fraction we produce by this equation will undoubtedly approach "1.0" as we reach the present day, since it is difficult to imagine that even the "freest" people in the world, in the "greatest country in the world", would not have to forfeit every possession, including their own sons and their own selves, if the government deemed it necessary for some future "war effort". We know this to be true, but we somehow convince ourselves that it was far worse in the past, and as a result we invent a past that never existed so that we can avoid the truth about our subjection.

This is why Omer Talon wrote that,

> "War is a monster whom there is a conspiracy not to throttle, so that it may continue always as the opportunity of those who abuse the royal authority."

James Madison said as much, warning that,

> "In time of actual war, great discretionary powers are constantly given to the Executive Magistrate. Constant apprehension of

[4] Bertrand de Jouvenel, *On Power*.

> War, has the same tendency to render the head too large for the body."

Other objective measures also present themselves. We find certain features, veritable *institutions*, that grow up alongside absolute power. Taxation is one. The institution of conscription is the other. An inconceivable complex legal system is a third. The first represents access to financial or economic resources of society. The second represents access to human resources. The third manifests the nature and extent of justice, as to whose justice it is, who makes the law, and by what measure and limits. In each case, if we compare with virtually any other period in Western history, we are not at all flattered, and so we tend not to look.

### *Aerial warfare in the peaceful interim.*

Having arrived in our timeline at the middle of the 20th century, we are now in familiar territory since there are countless books, documentaries, and popular movies covering various aspects of World War II. We will try to provide remarks that do not extend too far outside of our focused purpose in order to learn what was new in this nearly apocalyptic sequel.

Again we find that the (relatively) long peace provided time for a more systematic analysis of war. Whether or not this analysis was adequately reflective, we will soon find out.

Although the war provided ample material for horror, one of its developments that struck the popular (and military) imagination was the introduction of the airplane into strategic considerations. This was the era of the dogfight and of the famous "Red Baron" Manfred von Richthofen who alone was credited with 80 air combat victories, more than any pilot before or since. At first, aircraft were used almost exclusively for reconnaissance, and without radios they would drop messages and convey information with streamers about the static entrenchments below. Although this altered the way intelligence was collected, it did not revolutionize the way battles were fought. Eventually the synchronization gear was introduced that would allow machine gun fire to travel through the arc of the propeller without hitting the blades and the fighter was put into service, alongside early bomber aircraft which became sophisticated as the years wore on.

Bombers were not a significant factor in terms of damage and casualties throughout the war, but the war began and ended with threats from the air, beginning with the zeppelin airships and ending with the Gotha "pusher" biplanes that made raids on London itself. For this reason, and for the obvious potential of all powers to develop air power, the possibilities of aerial warfare took priority in military thinking during the peace that followed.

It was also obvious to military theorists that the mass army had perhaps reached its point of culmination and after watching the stalemate of trench warfare grind action to a halt for years, they began to talk about alternatives, and so it was natural to dream of decisive actions taking place in the sky above. Thus, one popular subject of strategic discussion was not only the heavier use of aircraft, but, more specifically, the strategic use of bombers to attack cities behind enemy lines. It was not uncommon at the time to hear someone in the straight say that "the next war will be fought in the air". Was not the great challenge of WWI the problem of immobility? And what is flight but the escape from all limits of terrain, the supreme mobility?

One of the more influential prophets of air power was the Italian General, Giulio Douhet. He understood that the 'conquest of the air' meant more than either land (army) or sea (navy) power had meant, since a superior navy meant only superiority in water, and superior army meant only superiority on land, but superiority in the air, once achieved, could encounter no such obstacle or limitation.

Previously a nation had to determine, based on its geographical position and perceived threats, whether it wanted to pour its money into its navy or army, but now it was not so simple. Likewise, the threat of an air raid had consequences for defensive considerations since it required defense not only of the front but across the entire possible range of enemy aircraft, far behind enemy lines. Douhet observed that the airplane was able to act in four fields: independent attack even beyond enemy defenses, the protection of homeland against hostile attack, or to support its navy, or to support its army.

It is with some irony that just at the moment when technological development had rendered battlefield defenses almost impenetrable, the airplane appears and renders battlefield defenses virtually irrelevant. As if the devil, seeing that the action might come to a stall, inserts some new instrument of destruction into the minds of men.

Now as to the evolution of strategy, we noted earlier when discussing Clausewitz's order of objectives that he had placed the 'opinion of the enemy population' third, but we remarked that it would perhaps have been better to place it first since in many cases that is ultimately what must be conquered. Theoreticians themselves now understood this problem and Douhet, rational to a monstrous fault, sought to overcome it in the most direct way, via aerial bombardment.

We have already seen that the thin line between combatant and non-combatant has been almost erased in a time when nations at war become massive war machines. Every blade of grass and every living person within the borders of that nation are to be incorporated into its labors. Yet the extension of war had not yet found a way to reach beyond the front, that final 'boundary' that kept the battlefield in this place and not another. With the airplane, however, the front is a line on a terrestrial plane that poses no obstacle, and for the nation that controls the air, the battlefield is everywhere that bombs can be dropped. The attitude was later conveyed by Roosevelt when he said, "Hitler built a fortress around Europe, but he forgot to put a roof on it."

> "If one man makes a knife and gives it to another so that the second may commit a murder, both will be hanged if caught. So girls working in a munition factory are as legitimate targets for bombs as the soldiers who shoot off the munitions. Indeed it is difficult to drop a bomb anywhere in hostile territory without hitting someone whose labor is important to the hostile armed forces."[5]

The people, after feverishly pursuing the democratization of the world for so long, will discover its meaning. They will have the equality to which they have aspired, and for them it will mean that the children in their beds are just as good a target as the soldiers on the front. *On the contrary, for Douhet, they are the better target*. Cities in general are better targets, once the archaic rhetoric about 'innocence' is discarded, since cities present highly concentrated populations and so can be exploded for greater effect.

If the ultimate goal is to convince the enemy population that surrender is in their best interest, on the assumption that they are the ones really in control of the government of their nation, then in

[5] Hoffman Nickerson, *The Armed Horde,* p. 325.

fact the quickest route to victory is to attack and terrorize the population directly. To 'convince' them not through the reports of their newspapers but by leveling city blocks before their very eyes. Fighting the army on the front was a means to an end that could be done away with.

It seemed to have become a question not so much of whether it was permissible to attack civilians in their beds, but rather how best to attack them for the greatest psychological effect, and when. Douhet describes future operations as he envisions them:

The bombers will appear at the break of dawn so that visibility is maximized but the city is not yet awake and so as many as possible are still in their beds. He also advises that this be done *before a declaration of war*, so that the target population is in no way prepared. In successive raids, the bombers will be armed first with high explosives to maximize destruction, then with incendiary bombs to light the rubble on fire, and then a third attack using primarily gas, since this will incapacitate anyone and prevent them from putting out the fires. Mastery of the air must be gained as early as possible and once gained it can be lost only with an incredible effort on the part of the enemy.

The average reader might be shocked to see such a morally bankrupt vision of war, which ironically coincides with a political era virtually obsessed with rhetoric about human dignity. We see how far we've come. It is not difficult for Douhet to see the logic of equality. For such a cold, clear thinker, if a child walks out onto the battlefield, it is not so much a question of whether it is a crime to shoot the child. It would, perhaps, be a crime *not to shoot the child*, since this act would undoubtedly shock and demoralize the enemy who witnessed it. After all, is it not the population that is the ultimate target? And certainly the child's parents would be irrecoverably wounded, 'demoralized', and that's the objective. Better, then, that a school bus had driven out on the field for greater effect.

In fact, killing the child is a kind of mercy, as is killing any civilian in such a horrible conflict, since in the grand scheme of things these acts shorten the war and reduce the total number of children who will die from it, and a bullet is much quicker than the starvation and despair that will be the lot of those who die slowly. It's all a question of arithmetic.

Clausewitz would, perhaps, have been horrified at Douhet's approach, but it is important to see that they follow an analogous logic: both disdain any sense of moderation in war as an evil that will only make the conflict worse. No extreme is too extreme if it brings about an immediate victory. There is no gentle killing, and so there is no civilized or uncivilized way of doing it. Only what works.

Shocking, yes, but we will see soon enough what it all comes to when the great humanitarian nations of the West have their backs against the wall. We dwell on the example of Douhet simply because, when we arrive in our discussion at the next global confrontation, we will find this new barbarism put into practice by 'good guys' and 'bad guys' alike, and with weapons that Douhet could never have foreseen. We wanted to provide the example of Douhet to show that what was to happen was not something that came about in an act of desperation, in the heat of the moment, but was the putting into practice of *peacetime theory*.

There are problems with all of this logic, problems that would only become more apparent after the tactics had been attempted, after all the carnage. The first is that what seemed intuitive--the idea that attacking cities would demoralize the population and cause them to surrender. Now, with the benefit of hindsight, we know that it did nothing of the sort and, on the contrary, tended to solidify the resolve of the people thus terrorized, showing them that they truly were dealing with a villainous enemy with no respect for their humanity. So often in war we are tempted to sell our souls for victory, and often we conclude the contract only to find that no victory is forthcoming, or that it is not the victory we wanted, since what we really want is peace and the kind of victory we achieved made real peace a forgone conclusion since it is difficult to reconcile yourself to men whose wives and children were cooked in their homes.

All of these comments speak to the impracticality of the terror tactic. We will not go into the moral issues involved for those who perpetrate the acts, although we should probably ask ourselves, in the words of the unfortunate ruler from Herbert's *God-Emperor of Dune*: "What is survival if you do not survive whole?"

### *Theoretical alternatives to mass war.*

In addition to Douhet's monomania of aerial conquest, other thinkers were proposing their own alternatives to the deadlock, with

predictions on what type of battlefield we would see in future conflicts.

One group emphasized technological developments beyond the invention of the airplane, and made their predictions in terms of new weapons, seeing that technology, developing at an accelerated rate, and army maneuvers at the same time *devolving* into irrelevance, that we would be dealing with wars of technological superiority. Of this school we find names like J.F.C. Fuller and Liddell Hart who, unsurprisingly, spent the last two years of the war as Chief of Staff in the British Tank Corps. Both of these focused on the futility and wasted effort of the mass of forces in the war, and the outright suicidal nature of infantry charges in the presence of machine guns.

One of the chief problems to be overcome was the almost complete loss of offensive power with regard to the infantry. Solutions proposed would involve the combined use of technology, namely air support and mechanized action on the ground. First and foremost the tank, which acted in two ways, as an armored vehicle capable of breaking through lines after the fashion of the 'war elephant' of ancient times, and also as a mobile gun mount, much like a machine gun, except capable of immediate deployment and, because now mobile, much less vulnerable to artillery than traditional machine gun units. The rapid deployment of a relatively small number of tanks could break through fortified positions that had become impenetrable. This idea would later be taken to heart by the Germans in the form of the *blitzkrieg*.

We will pause to mention, with respect to the morally questionable conclusions of Douhet, the prophets of mechanization were not led down the dark path to baby-killing, since the devices they had in mind were basically improvements or transformations of what were still *battlefield* tactics (whereas the bombardment of cities would be a *political* tactic) and always assumed the presence of enemy forces, and therefore military targets, as opposed to Douhet's emphasis on civilian populations..

Lastly, a third group of theorists reflected first and foremost on the general quality of training that characterized the mass armies in World War I. One such thinker was Hans von Seeckt. He did not so much believe that armies were irrelevant but that they had become *incompetent*. This could only be overcome by reducing the size of forces and increasing the quality and extent of their training.

Von Seeckt's thought is well-summarized in the following passage from *Thoughts of a Soldier*:

> "To what military success did this universal levy in mass…lead? In spite of every effort the war did not end with the decisive destruction of the enemy on the field of battle; for the most part it resolved itself into a series of exhausting struggles for position until, before an immense superiority of force, the springs which fed the resistance of one of the combatants, the sources of its personnel, its material, and finally of its morale dried up, although they were not exhausted. Has the victor really rejoiced in his victory? Do the results of the war bear any just relation to the sacrifice of national strength?…The soldier must ask himself whether these giant armies can even be maneuvered in accordance with a strategy that seeks a decision, and whether it is possible for any future war between…masses to end otherwise than in indecisive rigidity.
>
> "Perhaps the principle of the levy in mass, of the nation in arms, has outlived its usefulness…Mass becomes immobile; it cannot maneuver and…cannot win victories, it can only crush by sheer weight.
>
> "…the soldier, who seeks a decision in mobility, rapidity and inspiration, has grave doubts whether armed masses can ever secure a decision, and whether nations in arms can avoid finishing in trenches once more.
>
> "Anyone who has the smallest idea what technical knowledge, what numerous instruments, operated only by carefully trained experts, what highly disciplined mental faculties are needed for the effective control of modern artillery fire, must admit that these essential qualities cannot be taken for granted with men whose training has been brief and superficial…such men…against a small number of practiced technicians…are 'cannon fodder' in the worst sense of the term."

He thus developed his ideas in a way that emphasized smaller elite forces and the power of efficiently coordinated military operations involving all areas of technology and manpower.

If we now pause to review together the three approaches to future war imagined by these writers, emphasizing in turn air power, mechanization and ground technology, and superior tactical

training of specialized units, we see that the future world conflict, when it finally came, would happily incorporate all of these insights into its carnage. Yet the war gods would not cease demanding mass armies and all of the cannon fodder that the powers of the world could muster. We worked to overcome the terrible stalemate, and we more or less succeeded. But the end of the stalemate was never intended to reduce the carnage, but only to make it possible again, with modifications. Such a project could not be expected to do anything but push the body count even higher by 'pulling out the stops'.

### *World War II and the limit of escalation.*

We may again surprise the reader by only briefly commenting on what was, in gravity and extent, the most catastrophic conflict the world has ever seen. This is because, as with the First World War, the most *novel* and extreme events were only continuations of what has already been discussed here and so we need only point out how the war represents a kind of culmination of our present subject rather than a new subject to be addressed on its own. At any rate, there are entire libraries of books detailing the conflict in its economic and political dimensions and its military operations.

The experience of trench deadlock was, we hoped, a thing of the past, since the new religion of aerial bombardment alongside mechanization would undoubtedly change the game. In spite of everything the words of Clausewitz were still ringing in our ears:

> "He who uses force unsparingly, without reference against the bloodshed involved, must obtain a superiority if his adversary uses less vigor in its application…To introduce into a philosophy of war a principle of moderation would be an absurdity. War is an act of violence pushed to its utmost bounds."

Our primary question is: to what degree did World War II both incorporate and amplify the military techniques that came before, including the theories proposed in the interim? Did new technology really change the logic of the game or just take it to new levels?

### *Mechanization and blitzkrieg and the front in motion.*

Tank warfare seemed initially to live up to its promise, but in the end it only did so because of the surprise tactic of *blitzkrieg* used by the Germans at the outset of hostilities, which exploited their mobility and benefited from much improved designs over the dark, deafening

ovens of World War I. Blitzkrieg was a formula that worked as follows: a large force of tanks, aided by air support and closely followed by motorized infantry, would break through enemy defenses with the brute force of the berserker, and they would not stop but would continue on straight to the enemy command centers. Once these were put into chaos, victory was almost assured since communications would fall apart. The Germans used this technique against Poland in 1939 and it was so effective that they defeated the Polish army in a matter of weeks, and to show that this was no exception, repeated the incredible feat soon after in France. Here we can see that technological superiority is important but it is also not everything, since these victories were *in spite of* the superiority of French tanks in both quantity and quality.

Germany enjoyed a few shocking victories at the outset, but unfortunately a surprise tactic yields incredible advantages and then none. A solution was developed without delay. If the danger was in rapid penetration of the line, then make the line thicker and pour more resources into fortifications and obstacles like minefields. The result was that the continuous front was not so much overcome as it was *deepened*, and when the enemy did break through, the answer was to fall back into a second line and start over.

Blitzkrieg did not render the continuous front obsolete but it did, to a degree, break the stalemate in the form of intermittent carnage. *The most important point, however, is that it set the front in motion.*

The Russian city of Belgorod is a well-known illustration of the consequence of a front no longer stationary. It began with 34,000 people and after the action passed back and forth through the city multiple times as control changed hands and the tanks took turns driving each other out, there were only 140 people remaining in what was now a stretch of ruins. This steamrolling process demolished countless villages in Europe and was not a phenomenon that had ever been seen before at such a scale. Belgorod is again illustrative because it was leveled not so much because it had strategic value but because it just happened to be in the way. There has always been collateral damage in battle but now entire cities could be written off under that category.

### *The extremes of aerial bombardment and the decisive use of the atomic bomb.*

As for Douhet and the disciples of aerial bombardment, everything was implemented according to plan. Bombardment was simply far too tempting because as a new tactic its possibilities held endless promise in the imaginations of its proponents. Only experience and failure teach the limits of our experiments. Unfortunately for Europe, it was about to become the laboratory for precisely this experimentation that would show to what degree Douhet was wrong or right.

Germany led the way in aerial attacks on cities through its Luftwaffe, but it's equipment was not designed for this purpose and even with widespread bombing of major British cities it was mostly ineffective. Nonetheless, the Allied powers followed suit and in 1942 the British Bomber Command completely dropped even the pretense of targeting military facilities. The civilian population was all-around the primary target on the assumption that this would produce the greatest result, and it was only a question of who could devise the most destructive technique of bombardment.

The first firestorm the world had ever seen occurred in July of 1943 during the bombing of the German city of Hamburg. The British bombers were using a mix of bombs that was standard for the time and would have received a nod of approval from Douhet. First were the light incendiaries to start the fires on roofs and in streets, then the heavy thirty-pounders for penetration, and completed with much larger four-thousand-pound explosive bombs intended to cause enough destruction and rubble to stop emergency equipment from controlling the flames. The conditions were just right, and the result was the phenomenon of the firestorm, now infamous in history.

There are various eyewitness accounts of the veritable hell that was created at ground level, and what follows is typical:

> “The rain of large sparks, blowing down the street, were each as large as a five-mark piece. I struggled to run against the wind but could only reach a house on the corner of the Sorbenstrasse…[We] couldn’t go on across the Eiffestrasse because the asphalt road had melted. There were people on the roadway, some already dead, some still lying alive but stuck in the asphalt. They must have rushed onto the roadway without

> thinking. Their feet had got stuck and then they had put out their hands to try to get out again. They were on their hands and knees screaming."[6]

The temperature of the firestorm, which covered an area of four square miles, is said to have reached eight hundred degrees. Conditions combined to produce hurricane winds, transforming the area into a massive convection oven. Twenty thousand *civilians* died that night in about two hours. The phenomenon was repeated again in Dresden in 1945, but because the production of a firestorm depended on just the right balance of natural conditions, the allies were not able to reproduce it at will. Such was the limitation of the bombardment of cities. It was unbelievably expensive and despite the horror described above, it usually did not produce satisfactory carnage.

More effective were the American efforts at civilian bombardment in Japan. This was partly due to the massive B-29 bombers developed by the United States but also due to the tightly crowded cities of Japan and the materials from which these structures were built. What made these operations so effective was not that they were killing everyone but that they were rendering everyone homeless, and at incredible cost to the Japanese government. In the end, it wasn't enough, and the only thing that ultimately brought Japan to its knees was the development and deployment of the atomic bomb.

> "It was as if the sun had crashed and exploded. Yellow fireballs were splashing down. [Afterward, on the riverbank], there were so many injured people that there was almost no room to walk. This was only a mile from where the bomb fell. People's clothes had been blown off and their bodies burned by the heat rays. They looked as if they had strips of rags hanging from them. They had water blisters which had already burst, and their skins hung in tatters. I saw people whose intestines were hanging out of their bodies. Some had lost their eyes. Some had their backs torn open so you could see their backbones inside. They were all asking for water."[7]

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[6] Kate Hoffmeister on the firestorm in Hamburg in 1943, cited in Gwynne Dyer, *War*, p. 5.]

[7] Mrs. Ochi, cited in Gwynne Dyer's *War*, p. 284.

Whatever has been written about the moral justifications for the use of weapons of mass destruction against Japan, what we wish to drive home is that this was not some last resort moral compromise that came up "in the heat of battle" wherein the United States waded into uncharted territory or acted against its conscience. Rather, it was an escalation of a tactic that had been normalized for some time. In fact, it was an answer to a prayer, a better means to replace an inferior means. Nor was the choice of civilian, as opposed to military targets, an issue, since by this time the relevant distinction was an anachronism and if the distinction was made it was known that the civilian was actually the preferable target. In the records we can find that Hiroshima was chosen, among other things, precisely because of the population and because of the topographical features of the area which would maximize the effect of the detonation.

That day a single aircraft carrying a single bomb killed seventy thousand and more than any other single act of violence, brought the war to a conclusion. Only now are we in the presence of a weapon potent enough to change the nature of war for the foreseeable future, bringing into view a kind of singularity of destructive power. Beyond the event horizon, there was an abyss into which no one had previously had the opportunity to stare. The disproportion between ends and means, the imbalance between the cost of war and its aims, was now absolute. It is impossible to imagine any political goal that is worth extinction.

### *The military industrial complex.*

We have all heard President Eisenhower's phrase 'military industrial complex' and we likely entertain vague notions of what it signifies, but vagueness is not sufficient when it comes to an institution so central to the practice of contemporary war.

What we call the military industrial complex has its roots in the Prussian reorganization of the mass army in the early 19th century. Until that time war was a class affair but the example of the Napoleonic wars led to the absolution of the aristocratic monopoly on officer roles and made war a democratic art. Or more precisely, a profession which, like many others, would be open to anyone who could acquire the necessary educational requirements.

In terms of its composition and its logic, it became more like a corporation and in 1810 founded the *Kriegsakademie*, where candidates could receive additional courses on tactics, history,

administration. An early director of the academy was none other than Carl von Clausewitz, and it was during his tenure that he composed his great work, *On War*.

What is signified by this transformation is the change in attitude toward war, away from the idea of war as a class duty or opportunity for the most ambitious, to something that could be fitted in with the other sciences from the standpoint of mass education and mass production. The idea was to imitate other 'industries' and corporations and to treat the enterprise as a matter of technical knowledge and efficiency.

War became a profession, in the modern sense that just about anyone could succeed to some degree in it, rather than a vocation for a specific type of man. And it worked. It worked so well that Prussia and later Germany presented itself as superior in combat to its opponents in both world wars, and it was recognized that this was primarily due to its officer corps:

> "There were generals in World War II, Russian generals, American generals, British generals, who were as good as the best of the Germans, but the Germans had about ten times as many very good generals."[8]

In the face of this evidence, all major world powers followed suit by establishing their own academies and their own 'professional class' of military men.

The positive result was of course an increase in the competence of officers, and initially a more rational use of military resources. We say 'initially' because one of the unexpected outcomes of the institutionalization of the military was that men whose entire reason for being is to look for threats and conflicts will tend to see them, or *foresee* them, even in times of relative peace. It is the duty of the institution to identify threats, and so it identifies them. Since every nation that achieves a degree of power comparable to the United States, or develops a new technology, not to mention any nation, powerful or not, whose interests conflict with those of the United States, will naturally take on the appearance of a potential threat. Proposals as to how best to manage or meet such threats will occupy

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[8] Col. T.N. Dupuy, *Historical Evaluation and Research Organization,* Washington, D.C.

the government since the military becomes like its own branch of the government and has its ear at all times.

Another consequence is the eclipse of the traditional soldier type by the 'military manager' and an ensuing struggle between the two due to a distaste, on the part of the former, for the idea that superiority can be achieved by way of technological progress and statistics rather than honor and tradition:

> "The history of the modern military establishment can be described as a struggle between heroic leaders, who embody traditionalism and glory, and military 'managers'...Military managers...are aware that they direct combat organizations...but they are mainly concerned with the most rational and economic ways of winning wars or avoiding them...Heroic leaders...would deny that they are anti-technological, but for them the heroic traditions of fighting men, which can only be preserved by military honor, military tradition, and the military way of life, are crucial."[9]

Yet much to the chagrin of the traditionalists, modern war is more and more a matter of statistics and even if it were not, due to the necessity for efficiency and the sheer magnitude of the forces involved, it is necessary to place an emphasis on planning and systematizing and to treat military matters as if they were technical fields, even at the expense of the reality. Not to mention the problem of the unholy economic alliance between weapons manufacturers and those who argue for their purchase and use within the military hierarchy, which leads to the promotion of technocrats over and above their opponents.

The '-industrial' term in 'military-industrial complex' is of course due to the fact that the weapons and technology must come from somewhere, and since the military budget seems to be limitless, there are billions to be made by those who can provide. There is also a third party to the system, which we see under the aspect of so many 'think tanks' and 'defense consultants' whose job is to come up with rational justifications for military interests, and to develop strategies that require massive checks to be written to defense contractors.

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[9] Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*.

> "When I was in the Pentagon I had as many as fifty contracts under my supervision to think tanks around Washington to give us advice on strategy and tactics and even how to deploy various weapons systems…If they didn't answer the mail, in the sense of providing reasons for our weapons systems, I wouldn't renew the contract…
>
> "One day I met a young man from one of the most prestigious of the think tanks, and he said he was doing a study for the Navy on aircraft carriers. I said, 'Why in the world are you doing a study for the Navy? The Navy is the world's expert on aircraft carriers.' He said, 'Well, I don't know, but we've got a $50,000 contract from the Navy, and all we did was to tell them that we thought we could show that the Navy needed eighteen carriers rather than fifteen."[10]

The spoils of war, it seems, are the funds drawn by various power groups from their own native population by way of taxation and the political process. When we hear that Congress has passed another 'aid package' for Ukraine, or whomever, there is a defense contractor somewhere cashing that check. Some of the proceeds will end up going back to the think tanks so that they can continue developing their technology-driven strategies, and some will go back to the officers in the Pentagon whose promotions depend on their success in acquiring the 'resources'. Round and round it goes.

### *The irrelevance of the armed horde.*

Interestingly enough, as the military budget has continued to consume as much as its various players can justify, the actual size of the military, not only in the United States but everywhere, seems to have dwindled in significance. It seems the armed horde finally reached its point of culmination when the technology arrived that could decimate a horde of just about any conceivable size in minutes.

In the presence of nuclear arms, the size of the armies does not matter in the same way it always has throughout human history. It is a new stalemate, perhaps more terrifying than the first since the breaking of the stalemate could mean the end of much of the world.

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[10] Gene LaRocque, USN (ret'd), former director, Center for Defense Information, cited in *War,* p. 360.

The possession of nuclear weapons was rightly seen as a decisive advantage when only one country possessed them, and that is why they were so readily used: there was imply no incentive not to use them. Contrary to what sentimentalists might think today, our hesitation to use them again has little to do with the horror of the idea but with the real possibility that we'd receive similar treatment in return. The same goes for other countries like India and Pakistan who've achieved nuclear status. In that conflict in particular, India's population being seven times that of Pakistan's is not a significant factor. It is as if the presence of nuclear weapons not only nullifies the nuclear weapons but also negates the entirety of conventional war.

This is why Martin van Creveld could say: "A ghost is stalking the corridors of general staffs and defense departments all over the 'developed' world--the fear of military impotence."[11]

So much for conflicts in which both sides have the ultimate weapon. What of the fate of asymmetrical (at least with regard to nukes) conflicts? Again we are surprised to find that nuclear weapons seem not to be decisive. The Arab-Israeli conflict is a case in point. An Arab victory was unlikely before, and after Israel developed nuclear weapons it became unimaginable, and yet at the same time Israel has found their nuclear monopoly of very little benefit politically. Victories have been impressive against opponents like Egypt, even to the point of controlling the entire Sinai Peninsula, but only *temporarily*. The progress eventually reversed itself in response to a kind of balance that is not determined by the number of soldiers, weapons superiority, or nuclear power. Eventually the Israelis found that their territory after the Egypt-Israel peace treaty in 1979 was similar to the original 1948 border.

### *The nature of guerilla warfare.*

Guerilla warfare gets its name from the Spanish resistance to French occupation in the Napoleonic Wars. It means 'little war'. Guerilla warfare is revolutionary by nature in the sense that it seems unable to thrive outside of a certain revolutionary environment, which assumes the presence of foreign occupation or else an extremely unpopular local government. Successful guerilla movements operate in the presence of existing revolutionary feeling, and although more recently, particularly in Latin America, groups have

[11] Martin von Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, p. 1.

tried to *create* revolutionary feeling, it has not gone well. It is necessary that the government be occupied by a foreign power or else have undeniably failed in its role:

> "A potential revolutionary situation exists in any country where the government consistently fails in its obligation to ensure at least a minimally decent standard of life for the great majority of its citizens."[12]

The principles of guerilla warfare were summarized by its most famous teacher, Mao Tse-tung, as follows:

> "...simple in nature and suited to the conditions of the time...The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass, the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue."

Although Mao was perhaps the most successful, in terms of political achievement, in the use of guerilla warfare, this approach has been around for quite some time. As one example, here is a French officer writing of Spanish guerillas in 1810:

> "Wherever we arrived, they disappeared; whenever we left, they arrived. They were everywhere and nowhere, they had no tangible centre which could be attacked."

As Mao himself emphasized, a successful guerilla campaign must have a clear objective and this objective is usually limited in the sense that it is not a complete strategy for overthrow of the government. The intent is to make occupation expensive (politically and economically) and to make it seem like the hostilities will go on forever so that another power will intervene (such as the conventional army of one's own country or some other foreign but supportive power), causing the occupiers to cut their losses and pull out. The guerilla force aims at disruption and harassment, not final victory:

> "The conventional army loses if it does not win. The guerilla wins if he does not lose." [Henry Kissinger]

Of course, Mao Tse-tung was the exception to all this. He alone not only conducted a revolution based on guerilla warfare but saw this effort through to the eventual conversion of guerillas into regulars,

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[12] Mao, *On Guerilla Warfare.*

who then faced off against a weakened opponent, drove out the Japanese, and successfully established a new government. Such success is almost unheard of outside of Mao's case. More often guerillas just make a nuisance of themselves with the idea that they will make occupation so uncomfortable for the enemy that they will weaken his resolve in order to increase the chances of withdrawal.

### *Guerilla warfare misinterpreted.*

The United States entered Vietnam for reasons of global politics. They were under the impression that guerilla warfare was a worldwide threat to Western democracy, partly because whenever it flared up it seemed to be under the banner of Marxism, which was not so much because of the effectiveness of that ideology but because it was, at that time, the main revolutionary ideology on the market. No one believed in the old liberal ideology that drove the French and American revolutions, where the idea was to throw off the ancient chains of monarchy for the sake of 'liberty' and 'self-government'. The world, particularly the third world, had seen precisely how that ended after decades of colonial rule under the same forces of freedom and democracy, and it tended to feel more like exploitation. In other words there was not much else, in terms of political schools of thought, that the guerilla movements could have rallied around.

Yet the real heyday of guerilla war was during the decolonization period following WWII and it was so effective at driving out Western rule that by 1960 three dozen new states in Asia and Africa had achieved nominal autonomy from Europe. It was this combined with the questionable idea that Vietnam represented the expansion of Soviet power, via China, that drove the United States to commit in 1965. Unfortunately, the global pandemic of guerilla campaigns was coming to an end at that time and even had the conflict in Vietnam lasted longer it likely would not have had a drastically different outcome since the fighting would have remained a domestic issue and guerilla campaigns rarely succeed against local ethnic majority governments. Nor would it prove effective outside the late colonial framework and elsewhere would lead only to miserable failure. Such was the case with "Che" Guevara's movement in Bolivia, but he was not alone in his abortive project and most similar examples shared similar fates.

Thus, given the apparently inherent limits of that type of conflict, and the natural end that it was approaching, it was likely the arrival of the United States that assured that the problem would become

severe. This is all easy to say in hindsight, however, and at the time there was much to be learned.

The learning curve was so steep in Vietnam that the American strategists initially misunderstood the whole arrangement of the enemy forces. They thought that the men they were fighting were infiltrating from the North of regular army units via the Ho Chi Minh trail. As a result of this assumption they built their strategy around the idea that first and foremost they should persuade Hanoi to stop sending troops. As they would eventually learn, the enemy was actually composed mainly of local (to the South) guerilla forces and although they were receiving support from Hanoi they did not have their origin in the North. Ironically, however, the strategy was self-fulfilling and Hanoi responded precisely by doing what the Americans thought it was doing from the start: sending regular units South via the Ho Chi Minh trail.

### *Urban guerillas and the phenomenon of terrorism.*

As already mentioned, guerilla tactics tend not to succeed outside a certain environment, outside of which they end in failure. Failure means that efforts somewhat resembling conventional warfare deteriorate and easily become what today we call *terrorism*. We can see the transitional logic by looking at the introductory chapter of Carlos Marighella's *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*:

> "The urban guerrilla is a person who fights the military dictatorship with weapons, using unconventional methods. A revolutionary and an ardent patriot, he is a fighter for his country's liberation, a friend of the people and of freedom. The area in which the urban guerrilla operates is in the large Brazilian cities. There are also criminals or outlaws who work in the big cities. Many times, actions by criminals are taken to be actions by urban guerrillas.
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> "The urban guerrilla, however, differs radically from the criminal. The criminal benefits personally from his actions, and attacks indiscriminately without distinguishing between the exploiters and the exploited, which is why there are so many ordinary people among his victims. The urban guerrilla follows a political goal, and only attacks the government, the big businesses and the foreign imperialists.

> "Another element just as harmful to the guerrillas as the criminal, and also operating in the urban area, is the counterrevolutionary, who creates confusion, robs banks, throws bombs, kidnaps, assassinates, and commits the worst crimes imaginable against urban guerrillas, revolutionary priests, students, and citizens who oppose tyranny and seek liberty.
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> "The urban guerrilla is an implacable enemy of the regime, and systematically inflicts damage on the authorities and on the people who dominate the country and exercise power. The primary task of the urban guerrilla is to distract, to wear down, to demoralize the military regime and its repressive forces, and also to attack and destroy the wealth and property of the foreign managers and the Brazilian upper class.
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> "The urban guerrilla is not afraid to dismantle and destroy the present Brazilian economic, political and social system, for his aim is to aid the rural guerrillas and to help in the creation of a totally new and revolutionary social and political structure, with the armed population in power."[13]

As the author implies here, the actions of the urban guerilla may resemble those of the criminal and it may be impossible to tell the difference except through an appraisal of the target and some interior knowledge of the intent of the perpetrator. As stated, the criminal seeks to benefit himself but the urban guerilla (pronounced 'terrorist' in the media) fights for political ends against an oppressive regime which in this case as in others is envisioned as a kind of foreign occupation, even if only in economic form.

What, however, is the strategic intent? To transform the presumably moderate (but undesirable because controlled by foreign interests) government into a military regime and to drive that regime to extreme and brutal measures in an attempt to control the threat (which in this case is the guerilla movement), which will turn the masses against the government and bring about the desired revolution. The French Marxists called this doctrine *la politique du pire*, 'the policy of making things worse':

> "It is necessary to turn political crisis into armed conflict by performing violent actions that will force those in power to

[13] Carlos Marighella, *Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla*.

> transform the political situation of the country into a military situation [i.e., carry out a military coup]. That will alienate the masses, who, from then on, will revolt against the army and the police and blame them for this state of things."[14]

The only problem is that the first phase was too easy and the last phase too difficult. Various groups were successful in creating chaos and bringing about a harsh military dictatorship, but in too many cases the revolution did not follow because it turned out the military dictatorship was too effective at rooting out the guerillas. The would-be revolutionaries succeeded only in destroying what order there was, in some cases bringing about a reign of terror. The 'insurgents' would use terror to create chaos for the government and the government would use terror to fight the insurgents, and typically the government had more resources and better organization.

### *Yasser Arafat's PLO and possibilities of effective terrorism.*

We have said that outside the late colonial environment and against local ethnic majority governments the methods of guerilla warfare tend not to produce the desired results, and that especially in urban environments this causes such movements to devolve into terrorism plain and simple, making the situation worse than it was to begin. So far so good, but this is not an adequate treatment of the phenomenon of terrorism and in fact leads one to believe that it lacks a rational objective and proceeds more or less through chaotic violence.

To see why this oversimplification is misleading we can look at the strategy of Yasser Arafat's PLO organization from its foundation in 1964.

From the point of view of the Western world, Palestine was an area on the map with a history but much like the situation of the Native Americans. The groups living there had never 'filled out the paperwork' with Europe, and so they were not considered a nation. Since they were not a nation, and nationalism was the only vocabulary the European powers understood, then the Palestinians may as well have never existed. The formation of Israel, on the other hand, although recent and in a sense artificial, was well-managed

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[14] Carlos Marighella, *Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla*.

from a legal standpoint, and its advocates had all their paperwork in order. This meant that they could claim a 'legally recognized' existence and certain rights. With the support of their European friends and their own tenacity the Israelites achieved superiority over their opponents and in 1948 won their independence. The result was that many 'Palestinians' were driven out and have remained in a state of limbo ever since, lacking any significant military power but feeling as though they were cast out from their own lands and assuming that their own leaders would restore them by war sooner or later. By 1976 it was clear that no victory would be forthcoming.

Part of Arafat's mission was to achieve real political status for the Palestinians as 'Palestinians' and not just Arab refugees. Refugees are beggars but citizens of a recognized nationalist identity (even if created after the fact of having been expelled) had rights. The fact of being a post facto label has been used by Zionists and pro-Israel Americans to speak as if there is no such thing as a Palestinian but the claim seems groundless unless one believes these people came from nowhere or that regional identities count for nothing.

Arafat's insight was to understand that in the absence of military power, terrorism could produce limited results, one of them being to gain attention for one's cause, which was elementary but precisely what the PLO needed in their context. Thus, in September 1970 the 'Dawsons Field hijackings' took place, in which one of the groups operating under the PLO took control of four airliners (three bound for New York and one for London), flew them to a desert airfield in Jordan, and destroyed them on television for the world to see (the passengers were evacuated first). This particular event resulted in the death of one hijacker but no noncombatants died and the media effect was enormous, having precisely the result that was intended. Subsequent actions of terrorism were not so clean, but at this point one can see the precise rationale for organizations like the PLO.

Arafat said that "Palestine is the cement that holds the Arab world together, or it is the explosive that blows it apart." He ought to have said "and" instead of "or" since it has proven to act as both simultaneously, reflecting both the unity of the Arab countries, which is Islam, and their disunity, which like all tribal societies has always manifest itself as ideologically (if not culturally) diverse groups never able to combine for the sake of global political power.

It was the very diversity of mentalities that was Arafat's undoing. By 1980 his PLO had ceased terrorist activities and based on their earned recognition had been pursuing peace talks with Israel's prime minister Yatzhak Rabin. Unfortunately things did not proceed smoothly or quickly enough and both sides were fighting against rejectionist groups. Within Israel there were religious groups that thought no compromise should be made, and on the Palestinian side there was Hamas and others, even Marxist movements. Here we see the effective yet chaotic nature of terrorism, and the indirect manner of its operation. In order to undermine Arafat, the Islamist groups that opposed him did not go after him but instead used terrorist actions to turn Israeli opinion against the idea of concessions and in this way they sabotaged their own leaders who were negotiating on their behalf. And it worked. The rejectionists drove the vote to the Likud Party's Benjamin Netanyahu and hopes of peace receded into the distance. In this way you could say that the rejectionists of both sides cooperated in terrorism, since Rabin was assassinated not by a Palestinian but by a radical Jew.

### *Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and the Islamist project.*

Osama bin Laden and the Islamists in general present a good example of why the modern categories used to envision war are not sufficient, since his reasons are at the same time ancient and purely modern. Ancient in the sense that men have been fighting with religion as their motive since perhaps the beginning of time; modern since the rise of nation states has not seen a religious war until now and it cannot manifest itself as a Crusade in the old sense, and is incomprehensible within the context of modern political categories. This can be seen in his language, where he accuses "the nations of infidels have all united against Muslims" and compares this to the historical battles for Jerusalem, and paints a picture of the whole world as divided into "the camp of belief and the camp of disbelief".

We will not delve into the idea of holy war here, since that is more properly fitted into doctrinal discussions and traditional political philosophy derived from those doctrines, and moreover we have addressed it already in those sections. Here we are interested more in the methods used by these groups who do not see themselves as part of the global nation state system and the strategies of violence they employ, namely terrorism, and whether this terrorism is effective.

We have already pointed out that terrorism is not effective as a means of government overthrow, even less than 'urban guerilla warfare'. Yet as we pointed out with the PLO's hijacking of airliners, terrorism can be very effective at achieving limited goals. What for Americans was the most horrifying act of terrorism to date, the September 11, 2001 destruction of the trade center, was precisely this kind of targeted project in violence. Far from being 'indiscriminate' and aimed at senseless killing, the target was chosen not only for its location (in the United States, the worst offender of all the 'non-believers' in the eyes of the Islamists) but the specific buildings even had a symbolic character.

Perhaps it will help to review al-Qaeda's grievances. The Muslim countries are not faring well, they have slipped into the hands of Western-minded (infidel-minded) leaders who undermine the morals and faith of the people or else make it difficult for faith to thrive. As a result, God has withdrawn his support for his people. The only way to salvage the Islamic way of life is to shake off the influence of the Western powers in Islamic countries, and this would require that the local governments of Islamic nations be overthrown and replaced by Islamists. This follows the logic that one must 'put his own house in order' before going out to correct the errors of others. The Islamic world recovered, it will be possible to re-unite the people Islam after the fashion of the Prophet himself (since his most miraculous political achievement was to bring unity to his people). At this point, God's favor will be earned, and with the combined might of all the Islamic nations, it will be possible to directly face the Western powers head on, either to overcome and concern the infidels or, in less drastic versions, to at least break their global stranglehold.

It should be acknowledged that many, perhaps *most*, Muslims do not agree with this plan, but those who live in the Arab world are more likely to agree with it because they (often rightly) perceive Western interference in local affairs to be the greatest obstacle to self-direction. They feel thwarted by foreign interests and powerless to respond, at least in terms of the accepted political means. That is where terrorist actions come into play.

The aim of terrorist violence, according to the plan we've outlined, is first to overthrow the local Islamic states and then to replace them with non-Westernized rule. For this reason, the Middle East seems to us, at least from what we see on television, to be a hotbed of car bombings and hostage situations. There is a goal, but it is not being

realized because as we already observed, terrorism as a primary strategy cannot overthrow governments. Instead it tends to backfire by reinforcing the brutality of the government that the terrorists aimed to overthrow, at the same time winning no one over to their cause.

Is there a better way, then, to achieve the revolutionary upheaval that the terrorist desires and show them who the real enemy is? Clearly a bomb detonated in an Islamic city won't do the job, but what if the terrorist could trigger an unjustified invasion on the part of the oppressive West into Islamic states, showing the people in no uncertain terms who the real enemy is?

Such was al-Qaeda's agenda since it was founded by bin Laden in the 1990s. Bin Laden's insight was that the Islamists should not waste time attacking the local corrupt governments, and at any rate other groups were already doing that. He saw a need to go after the West directly. It is the same old 'policy of making things worse' but applied on the international level.

The idea that the terrorists committed 9/11 because they thought they could make the United States withdraw its influence from the Arab world is obviously absurd. They could not have thought that it would work that way. In fact, they almost certainly knew that the response would be the opposite. They stated what they ideally would like to happen, a desire that perhaps many other Muslims could agree with, but they did not believe that it would happen, nor was that their goal. It is much more rationale to assume that their objective was to provoke unprecedented intervention by the West in Arab affairs and hopefully outrage not only fellow Muslims but even the Westernized Arab rulers:

> "Only a very ignorant person would have believed that a terrorist attack on the United States that caused three thousand deaths would make the U.S. government withdraw from the Muslim world and abandon all its client governments there, and there is no sign that bin Laden and his associates were either ignorant or stupid. Any sensible person would have known that the U.S. government's reaction was bound to be one or more large, armed incursions into the Muslim world in an attempt to stamp out the roots of the terrorism, and that it would not be too careful about who got hurt in the process…

> "If tricking the United States into marching into one or more Muslims countries was the strategic purpose of al-Qaeda's 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, it has to be admitted that bin Laden has had reasonable return on his investment: within twenty months, the United States had invaded and occupied two Muslim countries containing fifty million people."[15]

In the end the plan was wrong-headed and assumed more support for the Islamists than they actually had in the events that followed. The United States easily overcame Afghanistan through the assistance of local leaders who opposed the Taliban. The blind spot for many radicals is the fact that even those they fight for find them distasteful, but the radicals always seem to think that by driving things to an extreme, the truths that they possess will finally become clear to everyone else.

And of course bin Laden may have ignored the fact that the United States is not exactly reluctant to intervene in the affairs of the Arabs and may have been waiting for an opportunity to forcibly assert itself, but lacked international approval. The acts of 9/11 provided a degree of open-ended justification that was so obvious that some fringe groups claim that it was an inside job for the purpose of gaining popular support for the invasion of Iraq.

Osama bin Laden could not have anticipated that the United States would turn tragedy to its advantage and overthrow the government of Iraq, since it made no logical sense either at the time of the 9/11 attacks or in hindsight (now that we've had time to review the claims about WMDs that were used to justify it), but had to have been chosen first and foremost *because the United States wanted to do it*. It would have made more sense to focus on terrorism as a global network, since after all terrorism is not a government or a state and at any rate the public outrage had written a blank check to the U.S. government for its 'war on terror'. Instead, the Bush administration promptly cashed the check and used it for a war on a regime that had outlived its usefulness.

Such are the risks of terrorist methods, which, contrary to conventional war, do not seek to discipline and control the confrontational use of violence from beginning to end, but instead seek to merely unleash violence on oneself or one's own people,

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[15] Gwynne Dyer, *War*, p. 412-413.

hoping that the rubble will settle into a favorable new configuration. Sometimes it does, usually it does not.

### *Modern media and the distaste for casualties.*

One of the novelties of the Iraq war was the presence of television cameras in the midst of the operations. This was a risky concession from the standpoint of public relations since it could be, and at times was, a PR nightmare. Regardless of whether the fighting is justified, the public cannot process killing, certainly not on a TV screen. To reverse the statement: what the public does not know about the brutality of war cannot frighten it. Thus, in all traditional confrontations the leadership did not have the challenge of a public that saw and understood the death toll in precise figures, updated on a daily basis. Vietnam changed things by the fact that it became, more than other campaigns, a media issue. The North Vietnamese understood this and this is one explanation for their sacrifices, for example their decisions to stand and fight an obviously superior military force and to take extremely disproportionate losses. They might lose 10,000 and the Americans only 1,000 but the loss of 1,000 Americans would not play well on the television back home and the negative effect on the public would work in their favor. This is the reason for the famous exchange at the 1973 peace talks between an American Colonel and his Vietnamese counterpart, wherein the Colonel says: "You know, you never defeated us on the battlefield." And receives the reply: "That may be so, but it is also irrelevant." The North traded losses on the field for victories in the media and it turned out that the media victories were more valuable in the end.

Ho Chi Minh himself had seen this back in the 1940s and said as much to the French who preceded the Americans: "You may kill ten of my men for every one I kill of yours, but even at those odds, you will lose and I will win."

What this situation revealed was that in doubtful causes the public finds even the smallest losses distasteful. This is an obstacle to military operations that all modern leaders face, since in the information revolution there will always be paraded before the people in the living rooms a running 'death toll' and all manner of terrifying images to drive home in a new way (historically speaking) the realities of combat. The result is that superiority in arms and technique matter very little if public opinion will not allow them to be used in the first place.

In the end this horror of casualties is responsible for the tendency of the United States in the last fifty years to find ways of intervening in military projects with minimum risk to its own soldiers. Whether or not this is an improvement depends on your perspective. For example, it is undoubtedly this intolerance that has led to the present form of drone warfare, which puts the shoe on the other foot. Now the public tends to become outraged at their leaders because they see on the television that an American drone blew up a hospital or school or some such thing, and this strikes them as outrageous. Ultimately there is no way to fight wars in front of the public without the public becoming sickened by what they see, which leads to another modern phenomenon, which is the 'information war' and the efforts of states to control the information and messaging to which its people are exposed, without, of course, giving anyone the impression that it is suppressing the truth, especially in the United States where the myth of free speech and government transparency still holds sway. The demands for an adequate propaganda technique thus continue to accumulate and the machine becomes more sophisticated.

### *Guerillas, terrorists, and freedom fighters.*

Many of the terms we use for parties to a conflict are fictitious and interchangeable. We tend to adopt them for the impression they convey. This is not true of all terminology, of course. The term guerilla is susceptible to meaningful definition that identifies a certain type of soldier and a certain style of war. Others, however, are less so and are more designed for moral effect, and in the end they change into their opposites depending on which side of the conflict you are on. Terrorist, for example, is meaningless in any precise sense. Is it one who uses terror to try and gain a political advantage? One who targets civilians directly, intentionally, *strategically,* in order to try and create that terror, without regard to traditional distinctions between combatant and noncombatant? Obviously these are exact descriptions of the United States and Britain in their WWII program of aerial bombardment of Hamburg, Dresden, and Hiroshima. Perhaps a terrorist is someone who does these things without the sanction of a recognized state. Recognized by what authority? As has been said many times, one man's terrorist is another man's 'freedom fighter'.

This does not mean there can be no distinctions between groups or that we should ignore methods or the authority by which they wage war, but only that certain labels, especially *terrorist*, are not

typically used to convey meaningful military distinctions. Rather it is a propaganda term belonging to the political order utilized to signal who the public should hate and who it should cheer.

### *The problem of uncertainty.*

> "War is the province of uncertainty; three-fourths of the things on which action in war is based lie hidden in the fog of greater or less uncertainty."

This is why Clausewitz was generally wary of 'formulaic' approaches to strategy that reduced it to quantitative calculations. Speaking of theorists who proceed in this way, he says:

> "They aim at fixed values; but in war everything is uncertain, and calculations have to be made with variable quantities. They direct the inquiry exclusively towards physical quantities, whereas all military action is intertwined with psychological forces and effects. They consider only unilateral action, whereas war consists of a continuous interaction of opposites."

### *The problem of friction.*

Regarding friction, Clausewitz says:

> "Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is very difficult…Countless minor incidents - the kind you can never really foresee - combine to lower the general level of performance, so that one always falls far short of the intended goal…The military machine…is basically very simple and very easy to manage. But we should bear in mind that none of its components is of one piece: each part is composed of individuals, every one of whom retains his potential of friction…A battalion is made up of individuals, the least important of whom may chance to delay things and sometimes make them go wrong."

He likens friction to the act of walking, which is smooth and easy under normal circumstances but becomes clumsy and hazardous if we try it underwater:

> "Action in war is like movement in a resistant element. Just as the simplest and most natural of movements, walking, cannot easily be performed in water, so in war, it is difficult for normal efforts to achieve even moderate results."

### *The example of Japan's reversion to the sword.*

Sometimes, usually after a catastrophic world event like WWII or a nuclear scare like the Cuban Missile Crisis, we will hear suggestions that try to make it a policy or a point of international law to de-escalate conflict and sometimes that only using weapons of a certain power range or type. The idea is to turn back the clock a bit, having seen what happens when everyone uses the biggest guns they've got. It doesn't usually work because anytime any modern nation is on the verge of defeat, it is going to resort to 'bring out the big guns' and no policy of moderation is going to stop it. This leads critics to point out the naivety of such policies, and they will say, as if it were obvious, that 'you can't turn back the clock'. Yet there is a significant example of a nation doing precisely that, which we'll discuss below not necessarily because we think it possible for the West but because it proves something about the spirit of a people and how that spirit is made manifest in the way war is fought.

The context is late feudal Japan. The social structure that had developed since 800 A.D. was analogous to the feudal system in medieval Christendom even though it obviously developed independently, complete with knights (called Samurai) and arguably possessed better armor.

Guns arrived in 1543, introduced by visiting Europeans. For a hundred years they were used, and their manufacture brought to a sophistication that actually exceeded that of Europe. Then came Christian missionaries, and the Japanese understood that conversion to Christianity often preceded colonization, if not politically than at least economically. Such had been the trend elsewhere. By 1638 they had expelled virtually all foreigners (who had previously moved about freely) and to the rest of the world, Japan went dark. This lasted until 1854 when Commodore Perry of the U.S. navy arrived and more or less forcibly 're-opened' Japan.

In the process of recoiling from Western influence, and during the interlude between the mid 17th century and the kicking down of the national door by Perry's fleet, Japan also recoiled from firearms almost completely. They are alone, at least to our knowledge, in the fact of rejecting the transition to firearms and the power it offered to them, and so it is worth reflecting on their reasons and how it played out.

When guns were first brought to the battlefield, difficulties presented themselves even before shots were fired. It was customary for Japanese soldiers to participate in the ritual exchange of compliments before battle:

> "A very famous early battle near Kyoto began with a champion…striding out in front of the army. He was a romantic figure, wearing black armor, and carrying a black sword, a bow, and two dozen black-feathered arrows…In a mighty voice he named his name, saying, 'You have long heard of me, now take a good look. I am Tsutsui no Jomo Meishu, known to all of Mii Temple as a warrior worth a thousand men.'"

This type of boasting did continue in the early days of firearms. One famous instance involved an army armed with firearms who went through the introductions as expected but since they were using matchlocks and hadn't lit their matches or otherwise prepared their pieces, they were taken apart by the swords of the opposing side. In this instance they were defeated by the fact of having guns while observing the custom. This mistake did not have to be repeated too many times before the fanfare was dropped and battles commenced in the familiar European fashion.

For a time, as we have said, everything progressed as we would expect, and firearms became normal, but there was also a growing revulsion to them. That is to say, as weapons become more powerful, and more mechanical, they tend to overshadow the men who use them and fighting becomes a matter of rudimentary technical know-how. The 'poetry' of the sword fades into the gunsmoke, as Noel Perrin describes in *Giving Up the Gun*:

> "Prior to Nagashino, the normal Japanese battle had consisted of a very large number of single combats and small melees. After introducing themselves…people paired off. Such a battle could produce almost as many heroic stories as there were participants. It even had a kind of morality, since each man's fate depended principally on his own ability and state of training."[16]

In firearm warfare this sort of personal confrontation with one's enemy could no longer occur. Ideally, for the samurai, the battle would turn into an intimate test of swordsmanship, the proud

[16] *Giving Up the Gun*, page. 25.

demonstration of a true *martial art*, but that was now excluded automatically. The coward and the hero could be mowed down with the same volley. The length of a sword is the normal distance of conversation, but a bullet travels much further than a boast or a compliment.

> "Bravery was actually a disadvantage if you were charging against guns, while if you changed sides and became a matchlockman yourself, there was still not much chance for individual distinction. You were now simply one of the thousand men in your rank, waiting behind your breastworks to mow down the charging enemy. It didn't even take much skill to do this. Skill had been moved back from the soldier to the manufacturer of his weapon, and up from the soldier to his commander."[17]

Since the samurai were too concerned with heroism and personal victory to lower themselves to the use of firearms, they experimented with a kind of class distinction on the battlefield where lower class farmers might be given guns but the upper class warriors, the samurai, squared off with the traditional arms. Again, this ran into precisely the issues that you would expect, and many prestigious warriors were shot right off their horses.

The problem arises even in the absence of the traditional caste system and one scene from the American Civil War demonstrates it well:

> "At the height of the attack, a Northern officer rode forward through the black powder smoke, well ahead of his troops, and reached the lip of the railway cutting miraculously untouched. For a few seconds he paused there, sword in hand, as useless as he was brave. Some of the Southern soldiers just below him began to yell out, 'Don't kill him! Don't kill him!' But within seconds both he and his horse were shot down by less romantic men."[18]

It was not only the fact of death by firearm coupled with the inability to engage enemies up close and personal that appalled the samurai. It was also the idea that the lowest, most unskilled soldier could take

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Gwynne Dyner, *War*, p. 245-246.

down the most formidable swordsman in the land just by igniting some gunpowder and pointing a metal tube in a certain direction.

It is almost as if the Japanese moved in fast forward and gained a vision of what firearm warfare must eventually come to. In addition to the desire for distinction, there was also the obvious issue of the basic degradation of even the common soldier, a horror at the necessity of treating all of one's soldiers as cannon fodder once guns and artillery and cannon become the norm. There is one scene that replicates the deadlock of the Western Front in WWI, when two Japanese forces met, both carrying firearms, and the commanders refused to send their men to be mowed down. They both entrenched themselves and waited. Neither were willing to send their men off in the suicidal charge that would become common centuries later in Europe. Rather, the two leaders made an alliance and moved on to fight elsewhere.

Despite their proliferation, they were once again abandoned to a degree that modern readers will find almost inconceivable. There was no official 'abolition' but it is no exaggeration to say they were more or less abandoned. The last battle in which firearms took a significant part was the Shimabara Rebellion in 1637.

In Perrin's study already quoted, he lists various factors that explain what happened, all of them providing insight into cultural markers that may or may not exert a moderating influence on what is otherwise the unstoppable march of progress:

The first factor is *the presence of aristocracy*. In all traditional civilizations the business of war is the business of the upper class, and so the tastes of the upper class dictate the forms and weapons used in battle. For every modernist in Japan there were a dozen samurai who felt an instinctive distaste for the proliferation of firearms as something contrary to their vocation and that would eventually destroy it. This did come to pass.

Second, they had not yet experienced an external threat that they could not handle with conventional weapons. The Spanish had tried in Siam and lost. The Portuguese would not consider trying. The only efforts at colonization that had threatened them so far were the missionaries.

Third, the sword in Japanese culture had a symbolic value. It also had this value in Europe but Europe quickly learned to separate

beauty from use, and so they retained the symbolism of the sword but in the form of decoration and for ceremonial purposes, something we see today in the United States military where swords are used only in certain situations, never in combat. This would make no sense to a Japanese samurai for whom the useful should also be beautiful and there was no reason or benefit to separating the two. That separation which has in the modern world rendered the useful ugly and the beautiful useless is a phenomenon of materialism to which the Japanese had not yet succumbed.

During the first adoption of firearms in Japan we can actually see the impulse to make combat poetic in the form of instruction manuals which suggest postures for holding and aiming guns. The representations appear ridiculous to us and were clearly the result of a poetical culture trying to salvage firearms by making their use into a martial art similar to the art of the sword or bow, both of the latter readily lending themselves to elegance in use.

Fourth, the rejection of the gun took place within a larger context of rejection of Western culture and influence in general. Had it only been a matter of weapons it might not have gone so far, but the gun was associated with a larger threat and was pushed further away due to that association.

Firearms were re-established indirectly by Commodore Perry, which was well into the 19th century, since by that traumatic experience the Japanese realized that they would not be left alone, and that they were facing a choice between dignity, tradition, and beauty on the one hand, and effectiveness and brute power on the other. They understood and came to accept the hard fact that the only way to keep Perry's ten-inch guns out of their harbors was to develop ten-inch naval guns of their own. And so they did, and the rest is history: Japan modernized at the speed of light under pressure from the West, eventually flying planes across the ocean to bomb Pearl Harbor, which led to the ghost of Commodore Perry visiting once again, this time to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

# PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MODERN SOLDIER

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### *Not every man is a soldier.*

We have said countless times that the modern world's *ideology of sameness* will be its death. Sameness is the destruction of identity and leads to the collapse of all vocations since it treats everyone as adequate to any task (at least theoretically).

Every man is called to resist evil, and to resist evil by force in the extreme, but only the exceptional man is called to take up the sword as a vocation. Or we should say: for the normal citizen, combat is an exception, and the one for whom combat is a norm cannot be treated as a normal citizen. Only those whose special vocation calls them to forceful resistance should expect to use weapons of violence against other men on a regular basis. To ignore this distinction is catastrophic to war itself, and not only to civil society. One of the great corruptions of the modern world is that it does not discriminate when it comes to who fights its wars.

The unusualness of this situation, from the point of view of the history of civilization, has been outlined in our section on military history. Now we take up the inner experience of this situation, and we hope to show why it is repulsive not only to send non-soldiers off to war,, but to subject them to the necessary psychological conditioning that accompanies this type of project, which is the only thing that could render them useful.

### *Basic training or basic conditioning?*

Modern infantry training focuses on the malleability of man. It is concerned less with developing virtues, intelligence, or imparting knowledge (although it does, to a degree, do each of these) than with overcoming thought processes and restructuring them in such a way that the proper stimulus (such as a command) receives a proper response (such as the firing of a rifle). And the fundamental principle of conditioning is that this will occur *without* thought and *without* courage or discernment as prerequisites.

The process of induction could more adequately be classed as a *conversion* very much like religious conversion in the sense that it

reorders the fundamental worldview and value hierarchy of the individual, altering as much as possibly his interpretation of the world around him.

All of this is illustrated in miniature in so many seemingly pointless gestures, such as the shaving of the recruits hair to the scalp upon arrival. The practicality of such a gesture is almost irrelevant here. What matters is the psychological and symbolic significance of hair, its centrality to one's identity. Like infants emerging from the womb into a strange new world, the recruit goes into basic training bald as a baby. Nor is this symbolism foreign to other religious rites, as we are all familiar with certain Buddhist schools that shave their heads as a mark of renunciation, and much of the symbolic reasoning that would be offered for this act could be modified for application to the military recruit.

The same is true of uniforms, with regard to uniformity of identity. The new 'convert' surrenders whatever he is wearing on the spot and dons new clothes. Uniforms will be exchanged depending on context and will also permit the reinforcement of identity and praiseworthy actions through the display of medals and ranks.

Speaking of dress and hair, the recruits will undergo repeated and frequent 'inspections' which again are not simply for the purpose of making sure beds are made. Rather they are rituals of total submission to authority whereby the individual surrenders every detail of his person, posture, or gaze to try and conform to the expectations of the authority.

When it comes to enlistment, it is true that many men require an ideological reason to motivate them to get involved, hence the need for propaganda and patriotism that is emphasized from the youngest age, and which sets the stage for the first necessary 'response' of conditioning, which is to rally when Uncle Sam rings the bell for war. A lifetime of Pledges of Allegiance and a thousand other rituals and cues are responsible for the impulse to run to the enlistment office when conflict breaks out.

With that said, it would be a mistake to assume that the same ideological, religious, or emotional fervor that makes a man care about a war is the same one that drives him to kill once he is in. Once he has joined up, he in a sense hands over the responsibility of his motivations to the military who is far more expert at the kind of psychological and emotional reinforcements that will serve him best

in the moment of combat, and this may or may not involve politics of any kind. What in the end is felt as the motive for pulling the trigger is the sense of brotherhood and responsibility to the group.

> "The way armies produce this sense of brotherhood in peacetime is basic training, a feat of psychological manipulation on the grand scale which has been so consistently successful and so universal that we fail to notice how remarkable it is. In countries where the army must extract its recruits in their late teens, whether voluntarily or by conscription, from a civilian environment that does not share the military values, basic training involves a brief but intense indoctrination whose purpose is not really to teach the recruits basic military skills but rather to change their values and their loyalties."[1]

If one were to be mischievous about it, we could liken the process to gaining membership in a cult in the sense that identification with the institution comes with its own vocabulary and a sense of separateness from the rest of society alongside a feeling of having knowledge and values that transcend those of the average person. In the words of one U.S. Marine drill instructor, "I guess you could say we brainwash them a little." The practice of isolating the recruit from family, for instance, is necessary to the formation of a new identity. All outside influences only interfere with the process of 'dying' to civilian life and being 'born again' as a soldier. The comparison might seem melodramatic but the psychological effect is similar and should not be underestimated.

Military conditioning is not the result of some sinister plot on the part of modern states but is a direct consequence of the peaceful mundanity of modern life. We in the United States are not a martial culture and there is nothing 'warlike' about our upbringing aside from video games and sports. The distance between where recruits are, psychologically, when they arrive at Parris Island for indoctrination, and where the military needs them to be in order to perform in combat, is so vast that it is almost unbelievable how reliable the results have become.

### ***Basic training is re-socialization.***

Again, we emphasize that although it is necessary to use weapons, machines, and advanced technical equipment in the military, this

[1] Gwynne Dyer, *War*, p. 34-35.

know-how is not the central thing to be acquired in basic training. Basic training is the wiping clean of one's socialization in order to re-socialize the individual in a way that is effective for the military organization.

Such an invasive reorganization of one's mental and emotional furniture requires trauma or at the very least a consistent and controlled application of stress, and it is the business of the basic training and the drill instructors in particular to 'dose' the recruits with the proper amount of stress at the proper time.

The social context in which the soldier will need to function (in particular its scale) is always kept in view. In modern military operations, for example, the soldier is far more likely to find himself in the presence of a small group. The sort of socialization required for a small group is distinct from the soldier whose experience of combat will be in the form of a Greek phalanx, a Roman manipular legion, or the rank and file marching of typical 18th century infantrymen. More autonomy is needed and this alters the type of stress that must be endured, what types of failures must be guarded against.

One obvious issue with basic training is that it will be far less effective on men who are more settled in their ways. In other words, it is imperative to get your recruits young. Middle aged men can be brought into the ranks, but it is far more difficult to get the condition to 'take' in a fully developed personality. There is less malleability.

The ideal situation, for the drill instructor, is to obtain young men who more or less want to be conditioned. Thus it becomes, to borrow the drill instructor's words, a *mutually pursued process of brainwashing* and that the recruits vaguely understand but that they have invited upon themselves and to which they submit, knowing that this is what needs to happen in order to make them into the soldiers they wish to become. We should not interpret this situation as problematic in itself, since men have always and everywhere invited trials upon themselves in order to gain access to an elite brotherhood. For every war, probably throughout much of history, men have enlisted of their own volition precisely because they sought to test themselves by undergoing some incredible challenge. This is nothing new. The only thing that is new is the scientific efficiency of the methods applied and the scale of their application in the context of a mass army. We will discuss these points below.

### *Mass military in the absence of a traditional rite of passage.*

It is nothing new or controversial to observe that the modern world has almost completely abandoned men to their own devices when it comes to transitioning from boy to man. So much so that many of us, reading that sentence, will perhaps agree, but will not be able to formulate what exactly it is that might be absent. We sense that yes indeed it would be nice if there was a culturally sanctioned ritual (always combined with an *experience* or *trial*) that allowed society to help males perceive their status as men, but we don't know what that might look like, since we have no examples. None, that is, except the military.

The fact that the military is the only surviving male-orientated institution, accessible to virtually everyone, that among other things can guarantee a severe trial and an open ceremonial graduation into undeniable manhood, is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing for the obvious reasons that so many rootless and floundering young men would probably wind up in jail or on drugs or suicidal if they had not been offered the confidence and identity that the military can impart to a man; it is a curse because this kind of initiation into manhood is now only available by pursuing a vocation that does not belong to everyone. In this sense, the state has monopolized what is a universal need for men and now only men who become soldiers are allowed to experience a rite of passage. This is not the fault of the military. It was no conscious plot on anyone's part. Rather it is a result of a culture so abstracted from human needs that it has been able to ignore (to its detriment) the rite of passage in general. But our culture has not been able to get by without a military, and since the military cannot get by without men, the military has retained as its special possession an experience that needs to be accessible to each and every male born into the world.

### *The machinery is so good that just about anybody will suffice as raw material.*

We have discussed the development of the military industrial complex, which marries the processes and personnel of the military with those of capitalist industrial society and, in turn, with representative government. This has not been without its effect on training. This 'industrial mentality' which pursues efficiency and uniformity above all else is probably the explanation for why the processes of indoctrination in the United States are more refined

than elsewhere. Basic training is like a refinery or factory assembly line that is so well engineered that it can take just about any human material and mold it to its purposes. So efficient is the system that within a few months it can practically guarantee results with only a very small proportion of 'rejects' that the system could do nothing with.

Here we do hit on a distinctive aspect of contemporary basic training, which is the fact that it truly can take just about anyone. It is no longer a question of recruitment of the strongest, most disciplined men society has to offer. All that is really needed is total control of the person, twenty-four hours a day, for a relatively short period of time. It is a science in the sense that any experiment should produce the same results if conducted in a controlled environment, and it is this environment that is provided by basic training as a facility or 'camp'.

When they emerge they will be able to accomplish things that they never thought possible, but this enablement will be psychological first and foremost. Again, basic training is not geared to make a marksman, since that can be done with minimal training in just about any environment. Extremes are not needed. But to point a gun at another human being and pull the trigger with the knowledge that this person will die when the bullet hits them, that is not an ability that very many people possess naturally. It does not matter what we imagine, the fact is that in the moment there are plenty of men who will not shoot at another man even when their life depends on it. The power to *intend to kill* when firing the weapon is one of the true victories of the United States military.

There are several steps along the way but everything is geared toward developing and then reinforcing the predispositions that the military wants, and to eradicating the inhibitions that are not conducive (namely the aversion to killing just mentioned). All of this combined with a socialization that allows the individual to function seamlessly in a unit and to think precisely along the lines that the military wishes him to think so it can rely on him even under duress.

***Failure is an option but it is harder than you think.***

Basic training is envisioned as the trial of a lifetime, and in most cases it is, but the miracle of it all is that at the same time it is a trial that relatively few will fail. The feats are called 'legendary' and are presented as death defying, yet objectively they are not very

dangerous at all considering the fact that the last thing the military wants is to break the neck of a new recruit. Boot camp is designed to threaten failure, to teach men to fear failure (although almost all men already do), but without allowing failure except in cases where it cannot be avoided. There are a few who are weeded out, but the vast majority will graduate.

The point is that, again, the trial is a psychological one and is geared in such a way that it works *for almost everyone*. The modern military is democratic in its input and elitist in its output. That is another part of its draw. We have all grown up seeing the ritual respect shown to men in uniform. The norm is to treat all uniformed men not as mechanics, technicians, or managerial professionals (which is precisely what many of them are) but as men who've made the ultimate sacrifice for their neighbors. That kind of guaranteed status is irresistible to rootless and confused young men who desire *personal distinction* above all else. Military membership carries with it a status that is not easily acquired in civilian life, where status is far more attached to exceptional achievement, but in the military, as we've pointed out, the achievement has been designed in such a way that almost anyone can successfully endure it.

How great a payoff for the frustrated young man who just turned eighteen but sees no satisfactory prospects in his life aside from a factory or desk job when the Marine recruiter calls him up and *promises him* a future that involves respect, distinction, camaraderie, trial, and even a career.

Here is an example speech that could not but have almost universal appeal to generations of young men whose lives are, on the whole, utterly devoid of opportunities for manly achievement:

> "You have made the most important decision of your life…by signing your name, your life, you pledge to the Government of the United States, and even more importantly, to the United States Marine Corps--a brotherhood, an elite unit…You are going to become a member of that history, those traditions, this organization--if you have what it takes.
>
> "All of you want to do that by virtue of your signing your name as a man. The Marine Corps says that we build men. Well, I'll go a little bit further. We develop the tools that you have--and everybody has those tools to a certain extent right now. We're going to give you the blueprints, and we are going to show you

> how to build a Marine. You've got to build a Marine--you understand?"[2]

The magic of this trial that can presumably only be accomplished "if you have what it takes" is that even though the individual experiences it as spectacular, the drop out rate is somewhere between 10-15% across branches, so almost everyone "has what it takes", and unlike just about every other magnificent personal accomplishment, the process only requires that you do not quit. That is quite a requirement, obviously, but far different in character from what is required to gain access to elite levels in other fields, such as sports or music performance or other professions.

All of this is not to suggest that basic training is easy. It is far from easy, and so from the point of view of sheer trial, those who undergo the process deserve the pride they feel at having overcome the pull of surrender and made good on their commitment. We do not intend to take away from that. The point is only that, from an institutional point of view the system operates on an illusion of elitism that results in an actual elitism, if not in fact at least in mentality.

Especially due to the sedentary nature of most of American life, the fact of physical exertion is going to have a significant effect on mentality and emotion. Most young men, after being put through initial deprivations, will begin to feel better than they've ever felt before in the sense that they will *actually be stronger and more physically capable* than they have ever been, aside from serious athletes who might be no stranger to extreme physical training. But even for the latter, the framing of the physical challenge within the context of combat and under the direction of a capable drill instructor who knows how to administer stress, the challenge will be of a kind that cannot be found in any sport.

### *When soldiers won't fire and the necessity of conditioning.*

In his famous (or infamous, depending on who you talk to) study on US combat soldiers in the Second World War, *Men against Fire*, S. L. A. Marshall reported a surprising and controversial discovery: less than one in four US infantry soldiers actually fired their rifle at the enemy:

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[2] Captain Pingree, USMC, cited in Gwynne Dyer, *War*, p. 43.

> "In an average experienced infantry company in an average stern day's action, the number engaging with any and all weapons was approximately 15 percent of total strength. In the most aggressive infantry companies, the figure rarely rose above 25 per cent of total strength from the opening to the close of action."[3]

Marshall did not require a soldier to have killed or even wounded an enemy to be counted as an active firer. He counted any soldier that had fired one or two rounds as active, which is a very minimal threshold for participation.

The findings were not always well received, mostly because of the reigning assumption that American soldiers were the most effective in the world, and that to be more effective what was really needed for the military was more and better firepower, but what Marshall claimed to have discovered was that a far more important problem was for more men to fire their weapons. Since then, Marshall's findings have been both contested but also corroborated. Take for example the witness of R.C. Anderson, a Canadian artillery forward observer in WWII:

> "I can confirm many infantrymen never fired their weapons. I used to kid them that we fired a hell of a lot more 25-pounder [artillery] shells than they did rifle bullets. In one position…we came under fire from an olive grove to our flank. Everybody dived for cover. I was not occupied, at that moment, on my radio, so, seeing a Bren, I grabbed it and fired off a couple of magazines. The Bren gun's owner crawled over to me, swearing, 'Its OK for you, you don't have to clean the son of a bitch.' He was really mad."[4]

Even if his figures for World War II were somehow significantly off, and his later findings from the Korean War are more accurate, which came in at 50% non-firing personnel, that is still shocking and has consequences for how we go about preparing our soldiers for battle. We will discuss these consequences below alongside other remarks on the psychology (social and individual) of war.

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[3] S. L. A. Marshall, *Men against Fire*. p. 56.
[4] Cited in Dave Grossman, *On Killing*, xvii.

### *Fight, flight, posture, submit.*

We have all heard of the 'fight or flight' dichotomy which supposedly provides the two possible responses to danger. A man is attacked, and he can either turn and fight or he can flee. But in reality we find that these are not the only options, especially when the threat comes from a fellow member of the human species. When this is the case, there are other alternatives. First is the option to posture. This is not necessarily a bluff, but can act as a precursor to combat, usually in the form of threatening gestures which themselves are a threat of violence on which the individual will make good if needed. We've all seen this in the pre-fight ritual that almost always takes place before informal brawls, whether on the playground or outside the local bar. The two individuals will flail their arms, swagger, talk, maybe even 'get in each other's faces' but often won't physically touch. The act is so recognizable and formulaic that it resembles a dance, and this dance is a form of posturing. Posturing may precede a fight as its introductory phase, or it may in many cases allow the individual to avoid the fight while at the same time not flee from it.

The other alternative is submission, which in day to day settings might look like lowly cowering in the face of a bully, giving in to the demands of a mugger, and so on. In war, submission is called *surrender*.

What do the concepts of posturing and submission mean for us? With regard to Marshall's findings, however valid they might be, we can see that posturing is entirely possible even in a firefight, and it is precisely the alternative of posturing that is chosen by various soldiers throughout recent history.

Posturing in combat may involve pretending to engage in useful combat activities such as reloading or performing minor supportive tasks for the man next to you. Nor must one abstain from using the weapon. In fact we could say that the invention of gunpowder offered soldiers the supreme means of posturing without engaging the enemy. It would be far more difficult to perform 'mock fighting' with a sword or spear in close quarters, and no doubt it was less common to stick to posturing in that context. With the musket, however, the elaborate process of loading and the loud report that comes with the trigger pull all amount to the ideal posturing formula. A man who opts for posturing might fire, but he will fire aimlessly, or with the barrel aimed high so as to pose no real threat to the enemy.

### *Civil war posturing and the Battle of Gettysburg.*

One Civil War anecdote has a Union soldier reflecting to his great grandchildren: "I wasn't mad at anyone. I always fired high."

The problem of non-firing soldiers is, not surprisingly, more pronounced in wars where the soldiers do not understand the motivation or rationale for the war. Or maybe they understand the reasons but have failed to internalize them as motives strong enough to drive them to kill. Not that soldiers always need to internalize the reasons proffered by states for war. Many do not, and instead function efficiently on the basis of their own reasons, whether those revolve around ideals like patriotism, or the plain and simple taste for danger. But in the absence of self-motivation or idealism or obvious rationale, and especially in armies composed of unwilling conscripts, the phenomenon of non-firing soldiers is going to present itself.

Even worse still will be those conflicts that pit men against their peers, against men whom they might know personally or might see as neighbors. Such was the case with the American Civil War. The Battle of Gettysburg presents a famous case in point regarding the problem of posturing *instead of fighting*.

In a book called the *Civil War Collector's Encyclopedia*, we are told that after the Battle of Gettysburg, 27,574 muskets were recovered from the field. Of these tens of thousands of muskets, "at least 24,000" were loaded. That is odd since a musket on a battlefield that is being fired by an advancing soldier as soon as it is ready would naturally spend most of its time *unloaded*. That is, *if it is being fired*. More shocking, however, is that half of the loaded muskets were not simply loaded, but were loaded twice. Six thousand were loaded with anywhere from three to ten rounds in the barrel.

Within the 'fight or flight' paradigm, this evidence is absurd, but with the option of posturing it becomes clear. The man who wishes to posture can either fire high or pretend to be doing important things instead of firing. In the case of an advancing line (as was the case with Gettysburg) there was not much else to pretend to do except to go through the loading motions over and over (and over). Partly this is explained by the demands of the combat situations that prevailed at the time. As Lt. Col. Dave Grossman writes:

> "The physical necessity for muzzle-loaders to be loaded from a standing position, combined with the shoulder-to-shoulder massed firing line so beloved of the officers of this era, presented a situation in which--unlike that studied by Marshall--it was very difficult for a man to disguise the fact that he was not shooting. And in this volley-fire situation…the 'mutual surveillance' of authorities and peers must have created an intense pressure to fire."[5]

Unlike the dispersed positions common to modern battlefields and trench war, a Civil War soldier in the heat of battle was exposed to sets of eyes all around and could not but perform in some way, either by fighting or through a charade of some kind.

### *The psychiatric casualty and the myth of easy killing.*

Traditional wisdom has always taught us that combat is a vocation or if not a vocation at least something that demands exceptional virtues. We should not be surprised to find that most men simply do not function as expected when a gun is placed in their hands and they are commanded to fire. But we live in an age of egalitarian democracy wherein every man's rights are equal and thus every man's duties are equal, and in a sense every man's value and virtue are likewise at least potentially equal. Much like the idea of universal literacy, universal conscription is an anthropological statement, and it proves to be false. Killing is not easy, at least not for a normal, healthy individual. He can be made to do it, but the dilemma is that when you put a warrior on the field you raise him to his highest potential, whereas if you put a man there who doesn't belong, you degrade him. Over time, the West has perfected the process of conditioning such that almost every man who graduates bootcamp will kill when told to kill, but it came at a cost. That cost sometimes looms large, as with the phenomenon of PTSD that followed in the wake of Vietnam. But first it is necessary to demonstrate that this difficulty is present through all modern wars.

If it is necessary to drive this point home, it is partly because our current culture, whether in the form of movies or video games, presents killing as easy, as something that comes almost naturally to any man who is both healthy, of sound mind, and courageous. The only time we see hesitation is during the stock movie scene where a woman is cowering with a gun pointed at an advancing villain and

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[5] Dave Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 24.

he says something like “You won’t do it,” and then he takes the gun away and claims another victim. The scene comes off as completely unbelievable as the audience mutters, “just shoot him!” The assumption is generally that the depiction is totally unrealistic and no one would refrain from firing if their life was on the line. Again, this does not align with the evidence. Killing is hard.

To get a hint of the profound mental resistance to killing that is experienced by most men (there are exceptions, born killers) we can examine the concept of the psychiatric casualty.

Casualties in battle are men rendered unable to fight. We are accustomed to consider this as a description of one’s physical condition. If someone is a casualty they must have been physically wounded to the point that they can no longer function. But there are also psychiatric casualties, in other words men rendered unable to fight due to something like nervous collapse. Nor is this an artificial modern category since records of this problem reach back to World War II, long before concerns about PTSD arose.

During World War II alone, the United States lost 504,000 men due to ‘psychiatric collapse’. At one point these psychiatric casualties were mounting faster than recruits were being drafted.

During the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, on both sides there were problems with psychiatric collapse and up to a third of all losses on the Israeli side were psychiatric in nature. The problem grew worse for Israel during the invasion of Lebanon a decade later, when psychiatric casualties doubled the number of fatalities.

The idea that there is a limit to the nervous and psychological endurance of the soldier is not new, but prior to specific study it appears to have been misunderstood or exaggerated, probably because it is so dependent on the type of war being fought. Going into World War I the British thought their men could last up to a year before succumbing to psychological collapse if they were rotated away from the front in the proper intervals. One notable World War II study by Swank and Marchland (1946) claimed that the average soldier could be expected to last two months in combat and after that amount of time had elapsed, 98% would become psychiatric casualties of some kind.

Part of the issue is that modern battlefields subject soldiers to a level of stress that is an order of magnitude higher than just about any

other form of war in recorded history. There was no previous period when men were expected to undergo constant bombardment and move about in waist deep muck day and night with little or no sleep. Battles traditionally lasted a few hours or in the case of a siege, longer but even in the most drawn out siege there was nothing like the constant stress of trench warfare. Action came and went in waves, it was not a matter of constantly keeping one's head down at risk of a bullet going through it, every second of every day, for years.

What does this have to do with killing, and does this not suggest that it is stress, and not resistance to killing, that is the danger? Yes and no. The wear and tear, psychological or physical, that soldiers undergo in modern war is no doubt a significant factor in their suffering but we can also point out that non-killing roles typically suffer far fewer psychiatric casualties than killing roles. For example, medical personnel have been considered some of the most reliable and stable of all action-oriented roles. It is also known that officers are only half as likely to become psychiatric casualties, even though they are more often killed, and sometimes even targeted specifically, in comparison to the men they command. This is at least partly explained by the understanding in contemporary war that they will not pick up a rifle and fight, and that an officer who is fighting is not doing his job.

When asked after a battle what their biggest fear in the heat of battle was, they do not give the expected response that they were afraid of dying, or afraid of being hurt. They tend to say that they were terrified most of all at the thought of letting others down, of failing to do their job. And their job is to kill.

With that said, we should not fall into tunnel vision, as some writers have done, and present the reluctance to kill as the primary overarching challenge of combat, nor is killing the only inhibition addressed by military training.

### *Other situations with low psychiatric casualty rates.*

Aside from medical personnel (non-combat roles) and officers, other situations where we would expect fear to cause psychiatric casualties yield surprising results.

Patrols sent behind enemy lines are often not afflicted with the above problems. This could be because they tend to be hidden and are in a sense only indirectly fighting the enemy. It is also normal

that these units are ordered not to engage, and that when they are engaged they are ordered to break off contact and flee. They are insulated from the necessity of killing at least slightly, since their direct objective is not the killing of the enemy but reconnaissance.

Also immune to psychiatric collapse have been prisoners of war, even those caught in bombardment. Their guards, however, did experience the symptoms, and this suggests again that a great deal of the trial of combat is connected to the *responsibility* that the individual shoulders, and even if this is not necessarily the responsibility to kill, it may be the equally weighty duty of preserving life, of having others' lives in your hands, even if those lives are enemy captives.

Researchers have noted that civilians, even those terrorized to an extreme by aerial bombardments in World War II, do not display the same rates of psychiatric collapse, and this has been interpreted as unusual since you would expect a civilian, one who 'did not sign up for this' to be more affected by trauma and death but even the survivors of Dresden seemed not to experience it.

### *Endurance and exhaustion as addressed by military training.*

> "Springing directly from the principle of determination is the principle of endurance. The will of the commander-in-chief and the will of his men must endure, that is they must continue in the same state. It is the local conditions, mental and material, which continually weaken this state and in war often threaten to submerge it…endurance consists, therefore, in the power of overcoming conditions…These qualities cannot be cultivated at a moment's notice, and the worst place to seek their cultivation is on the battlefield itself."[6]

The opposite of endurance is exhaustion or fatigue, and it is precisely against the danger of exhaustion that the trials of military training and discipline, with all their abusive rhetoric, their mock hate, and their deprivations, aim to inoculate the recruit. Fuller's warning that "the worst place to seek their cultivation is on the battlefield itself" is therefore taken to heart by all sophisticated training programs and they take it upon themselves to expose men to these trials in as controlled an environment as possible. Just as a

[6] J.F.C. Fuller, *The Reformation of War*.

medical immunization may initially shock the body's system, and seems like an attack against health at the outset, it functions to preserve health by ensuring that the next exposure to disease will not bring harm, will not shock the system, or will do so with less manifest illness. So also with the hardships of military training, which are so many immunizations against stress, fear, and fatigue.

If training seems to emphasize the physical, it is partly because physical health is the basic precondition for combat success. Hence the Roman saying: "What can a soldier do who charges when out of breath?"

Nor are all of the other aspects of the human condition untouched by these methods. The military has retained an ancient recognition, so often ignored in other fields but impossible to forget in war, that the physical and the mental are fused in man. To improve and to test one's body is at the same time to test one's moral and mental vigor.

> "The great advantage of the gain in moral force through all forms of physical training is that it is an unconscious gain. Will power, determination, mental poise, and muscle control all march hand-in-hand with the general health and well-being of the man. Fatigue will beat men down as quickly as any other condition, for fatigue brings fear with it. There is no quicker way to lose a battle than to lose it on the road for lack of adequate hardening of the troops. Such a condition cannot be redeemed by the resolve of a commander who insists on driving troops an extra mile beyond their general level of endurance. Extremes of this sort make men rebellious and hateful of command, and thus strike at tactical efficiency from two directions at once. For when men resent a commander, they will not fight as willingly for him, and when their bodies are spent, their nerves are gone. In this state the soldier's every act is mechanical. He is reduced to that automatism of mind which destroys his physical response. His courage is killed. His intellect falls asleep."[7]

### *The importance of reserves.*

> "A general should always have a body of chosen troops about him, whom he can send to the support of sections of the army which are hard pressed."[8]

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[7] S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire*.
[8] Emperor Maurice, *The Strategikon*, A.D. 600.

Having stressed the danger of exhaustion in a general way we can now understand why, especially in previous centuries when battles were pitched and relatively brief, there was so much importance placed on reserves. To have fresh troops available at a decisive moment, to withhold them to the last so that the enemy has spent all of his before we call in ours, that is key to victory.

Napoleon was famous for the decisive use of reserves, and there is no shortage of evidence for his thoughts on the matter. Among his recorded maxims are: "Providence is always on the side of the last reserve" and "A general who retains fresh troops for the day after a battle is almost always beaten."

Few great commanders would disagree, and some go so far as to say that the correct use of reserves is what makes a great commander:

> "It is in the use and withholding of their reserves that the great Commanders have generally excelled. After all, when once the last reserve has been thrown in, the Commander's part is played…The event must be left to pluck and to the fighting troops."[9]

The principle is very similar to the old belief that the line that fires first loses, and to "not fire until you see the whites of their eyes" although its validity outlasted the invention of rifling, while the idea of withholding fire on an advancing line did not.

### *Inoculation against hate.*

We have remarked that military training aims to address the danger of exhaustion, and to overcome resistance to killing. There are other purposes wrapped up in its technique, and one of them is to negate the physiological distress that comes with being the object of your enemy's hate. There is a serious trial that results from being shot at, not only in the sense that the bullets may cause harm and death. To have another human being hate you enough to try and kill you (if not in reality, at least in the imagination, for soldiers do not always hate one another), and to have to endure that kind of attack on your life for extended periods of time, is an experience that requires intentional preparation.

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[9] Winston Churchill, *Painting as a Pastime*.

What appears to the observer as sadistic abuse on the part of drill instructors is merely another aspect of inoculation: inoculation against hate, against being hated. The abuse heaped on cadets not only produces stress but also produces the feeling of being in the presence of someone who sees you as less than human. This is not prolonged any more than necessary and that is why there is a limit to this element of training. It would be counterproductive for soldiers to sense this kind of hate from command on-going, but it is necessary to experience it *in some degree along the way, from someone*.

Soldiers fresh in the field, even after this kind of training, still feel shock when the bullets come flying at them. "Why does he want to kill me? What did I ever do to him?" The reality of an attempt on one's life is not something that we can consciously process until we experience it, but the overt hostility and contempt showered on recruits at boot camp at least provides an inkling of what is to come, a preparation and a kind of emotional vocabulary for processing hate.

We can see the unnaturalness of the hostility displayed in war by observing the occasional exception, when soldiers find themselves unexpectedly confronting the enemy in an intimate setting. The response is not always to open up, guns blazing. When soldiers get 'too close' they no longer see just a uniform, but the face of a human being.

Marshall (quoted in Grossman's *On Killing*) related one story of a close encounter in Vietnam, when a Captain Willis ran into a lone enemy soldier:

> "Will came abreast of him, his M-16 pointed at the man's chest. They stood not five feet apart. The soldier's AK-47 was pointed straight at Willis. The captain vigorously shook his head. The NVA soldier shook his head just as vigorously. It was a truce, cease-fire, gentleman's agreement or a deal…The soldier sank back into the darkness and Willis stumbled on."

Another account is related by Keegan and Holmes regarding a group of Americans who jump into the wrong ditch in World War II:

> "And lo and behold there were about five Germans, and maybe four or five of us, and we didn't give any thought whatsoever to fighting at first…Then I realized that they had their rifles, we

> had ours and then shells were landing and we were cowering against the side of the ditch, the Germans were doing the same thing. And then the next thing you know, there was a lull, we took cigarettes out and we passed 'em around, we were smoking and it's a feeling I cannot describe, but it was a feeling that this was not the time to be shooting at one another…They were human beings, like us, they were just as scared."

### *How we use distance to overcome aversion to killing.*

Glenn Gray writes in *The Warriors*:

> "Unless he is caught up in murderous ecstasy, destroying is easier when done at a little remove. With every foot of distance there is a corresponding decrease in reality. Imagination flags and fails altogether when distances become too great. So it is that much of the mindless cruelty of recent wars has been perpetrated by warriors at a distance, who could not guess what havoc their powerful weapons were occasioning."

The basic principle here, which has not at all been lost on the military establishment, is that if you can distance the enemy from your soldiers, then your soldiers will not be nearly so averse to killing him, because he will inevitably be less real.

Distancing can be accomplished by various means. We can become separated from other men not only by physical space, but also by alienation, by convincing soldiers that the enemy is not a man with common characteristics, but is instead a moral monster, a separate species (or a degenerate member of the same species, which has the same effect), or by the development of some *ad hoc* terminology. Whatever is required in order to keep men who must kill from feeling like they are killing one of their fellow human beings.

Physical distance is obviously the most fundamental solution, and that is why modern weapons have proven so useful both in terms of power and in their ease of use. Take one soldier who must drop a bomb on a city he can perceive only as a cluster of lights in the dark. Then take one of those unfortunate men who've had to use a bayonet to pierce the body of an enemy. Based on interviews and human nature, the man in close combat, who killed but one enemy, probably had to overcome much aversion, exercise incredible determination, sacrifice much of his civility, to complete the act, and he is likely to suffer a sense of being degraded through it, if not guilty

for it. He may feel like a monster himself, even though he only did what was necessary for his own survival in the moment and against an equal who was trying just as hard to kill him. What of the first man? We know from interviews that the pilot of the bomber who visited Hiroshima felt almost no remorse at all, even happily reenacting the attack (complete with mini mushroom cloud) at an air show in 1979. Something that caused so much uproar that the United States government apologized to Japan for it.

The point is not, of course, to call Paul Tibbets a monster or a hero, but to illustrate the point that physical distance in this case meant that he could incinerate upwards of 70,000 people, many of them women and children and elderly, without experiencing the disgust even registering. Whereas on the other end of the spectrum, soldiers who killed even a single enemy soldier (not a woman, not a child, but a grown man likewise intent on killing them) in close quarters often cannot avoid vomiting or bursting into tears and are often visited in their dreams by the face of the enemy.

### *The language of war as social distancing.*

Nothing is accidental in the military. Or we should say, it may be accidentally discovered but everything is integrated into a unified purpose. Even the jargon adopted by the military serves a purpose, usually the distancing of persons from one another.

Take for example the process by which everyday items are renamed with military equivalents that no one else uses. A flashlight is a ‘torch’, the floor becomes a ‘deck’, and so on. These can be understood as a technique for solidifying group thought by the construction of a new language used only by the elite, creating a separation from civilian life.

The same principle applies in the derogatory (albeit usually meaningless) names adopted for the enemy, which usually changes from war to war: kraut, slant, gook, raghead, Reb, Yank. Each of these distances the enemy since it discards the normal terminology that would obviously carry meaningful baggage with it. In the Civil War, it would have been distressing to speak of killing “Virginians” or “Texans” since most union soldiers would have known someone from these places. Naming them “Rebs” involves the creation of a blank terminological slate and allows the term to be defined only in relation to the conflict, not in relation to whatever kinship might have existed prior.

***Technology has extended the spectrum for distance killing.***

When we reflect on the way distance permits us to kill with ease, not only physical ease but emotional ease as well--ease of conscience--we immediately see that the progress of technology is central to the exponential increase in the casualties of war and the spread of the killing beyond the front lines to segments of the population (like infants in their cribs, for example) that no self-respecting soldier would ever kill *up close*.

Examples are not difficult to find, the first and foremost of these being aerial warfare. If 70,000 died at Hiroshima due to the ease with which technology and distance permitted killing, we must remember that another 70,000 died in the firestorm at Hamburg, and another 80,000 at Dresden, and over 200,000 in firebomb raids on Tokyo. The common denominator here is that killing from up in the sky, completely out of sight of the population about to be decimated, allows the killers to completely escape the bounds of natural human empathy and avoid any of the normal repercussions to psychological well-being, not to mention the conscience in the long run.

We need not stick to the present. Going all the way back to the proliferation of the bow and arrow we can recall the prohibition in the medieval period (whether or not it was followed) against Christians using bows and arrows against Christian enemies, since these barbaric arms were only suitable for non-believers. The invention of rifling more than doubled the effective range of infantry, and so gone were the days of being able to see the whites of the enemy's eyes. Hand grenades would ensure that the gore of close killing would not have to be endured when enemies were hiding in an enclosed space or in a trench that was within throwing distance.

A seemingly mundane technology like thermal imaging has a profound effect all on its own since it would inevitably be combined with rifle scopes and other weapons targeting systems. It has been noted that sniper kills have always been 'easier' in terms of their moral cost, partly due to the reframing of the enemy through the lens. Now the enemy once viewed through crosshairs can be reduced to some blotches of neon color. The blood of your enemy is no longer red, how then could he be human?

A spectrum could easily be drawn up to illustrate the relationship between physical distance and psychological resistance to killing, with hand-to-hand fighting being the most difficult and requiring the most determination to overcome, and leaving the biggest moral wound afterward. Then we would list the sword, the long pike, javelin, the arrow, the musket, the rifle, the sniper weapon, artillery, types of aerial bombardment, and finally long range unmanned missiles. A more recent phenomenon has been the increasing preference for drones for attacks, which are usually 'manned' but in a situation that is indiscernible from a video game simulation. We have finally reached a point in history when video games *are almost the same thing as real war*.

There are multiple aspects to such a progression. Each of these technological markers vastly reduces the (non-economic) cost of killing while simultaneously increasing the number of people killed. Obviously this is a recipe for apocalypse, both moral and actual.

### *Personal remorse for personal killing.*

And Israeli paratrooper shared the following encounter:

> "We looked at each other for half a second and I knew that it was up to me, personally, to kill him, there was no one else there. The whole thing must have lasted less than a second, but it's printed on my mind like a slow motion movie. I fired from the hip and I can still see the bullets splashed against the wall about a meter to his left. I moved the Uzi, slowly, slowly it seemed, until I hit him in the body. He slipped to his knees, then he raised his head, with his face terrible, twisted in pain and hate, yes such hate. I fired again and somehow got him in the head. There was so much blood…I vomited, until the rest of the boys came up."[10]

World War II veteran William Manchester described his own kill:

> "I knew there had to be a Japanese sniper in a small fishing shack near the shore…I ran toward the shack and broke in…as it turned out he was in a sniper harness and he couldn't turn around fast enough. He was entangled in the harness so I shot him with a .45 and I felt remorse and shame. I can remember whispering foolishly, 'I'm sorry' and then just throwing up…I

[10] Israeli paratrooper quoted in John Keegan and Richard Holmes, *Soldiers*.

> threw up all over myself. It was a betrayal of what I'd been taught since a child."

The instances when a soldier was forced to kill a child or a traditional "non-combatant" individual is very illustrative here because it almost always wreaks havoc on the unfortunate soldier when it happens up close, but when carried out *en masse* from the air it is barely perceived. Take just one example from a Green Beret in Vietnam:

"I froze, 'cos it was a boy, I would say between the ages of twelve and fourteen. When he turned at me and looked, all of a sudden he turned his whole body and pointed his automatic weapon at me, I just opened up, fired the whole twenty rounds right at the kid, and he just laid there. I dropped my weapon and cried." [Keegan and Holmes, *Soldiers*.]

Nor is this a modern problem faced by modern men. A British soldier fighting in the Napoleonic era stated: "I reproached myself as a destroyer…An indescribable uneasiness came over me, I felt almost like a criminal."

We will return to the moral cost of war when we discuss the need for rites of expiation. For now we only intend to demonstrate the reality faced by men who must fully experience what it means to kill, and the *unreality* enjoyed by men who through technology are enabled to escape from any acquaintance with what they have wrought.

### *Better to surrender early than late.*

We initially pointed out that instead of the common 'fight or flight' dichotomy, the actual options in a violent confrontation are four: fight, flight, posture, or submit. We have not talked much about the last option, which is *submission*, partly because it is difficult for that to apply in war. Once one arrives on the front, in an actual battle, submission is already almost excluded. In other words, you no longer have that option, and should not really have expectations, should you claim that right, that the enemy will be happy to give it to you.

Refusal to take prisoners is of course a common problem throughout the history of war and although it is always considered moral and in accordance with the rules of war to accept prisoners and to treat

them well, it must be admitted that it is not always responsible to accept your enemy's attempts at surrender.

It will be helpful to distinguish between two situations. In the 18th century Napoleonic Wars, when flanking maneuvers and rapid marches could decide a battle very quickly, an entire enemy army might discern the reality of their situation and surrender. None other than Carl von Clausewitz suffered capture in a similar situation. We will discuss his experience during and after capture in more detail when we consider the historical treatment of prisoners in general. For now, it is only important to understand the general context and that it is this type of situation that the rules of surrender generally have in mind. It would have been considered monstrous to ride in and slaughter the defeated.

Now fast forward to the Western Front and trench warfare, where it may cost thousands of lives to take an enemy position. One Australian soldier wrote to his father:

> "Strike me pink the square heads are dead mongrels. They will keep firing until you are two yds. them & then drop their rifles & ask for mercy. They get it too right where the chicken gets the axe."

It is not difficult to understand the sentiment, and it would be absurd to expect a man who just faced the barrel of a machine gun to let the man behind it claim protection at the last second. On this point we can do no better than to quote Richard Holmes, who describes the difficulties of surrender. He uses the words of various other experienced soldiers to make the point that it is not all as simple as it may seem in the movies. Richard Holmes in *Acts of War* compiled the following testimonies to this reality:

> "Surrendering during battle is difficult. Charles Carrington suggested, 'No soldier can claim a right to 'quarter' if he fights to the extremity.' T.P. Marks saw seven German machine-gunners shot. 'They were defenseless, but they have chosen to make themselves so. We did not ask them to abandon their guns. They only did so when they saw that those who were not mown down were getting closer to them and the boot was now on the other foot.'
>
> "Ernst Junger agreed that the defender had no moral right to surrender in these circumstances: 'the defending force, after

driving their bullets into the attacking one at five paces' distance, must take the consequences. A man cannot change his feelings again during the last rush with a veil of blood before his eyes. He does not want to take prisoners but to kill.'

"During the cavalry action at Moncel in 1914 Sergeant James Taylor of the 9th Lancers saw how difficult it was to restrain excited men. 'Then there was a bit of a melee, horses neighing and a lot of yelling and shouting…I remember seeing Corporal Bolte run his lance right through a dismounted German who had his hands up and thinking that it was a rather bad thing to do.'

"Harold Dearden, a medical officer on the Western Front, read a letter written by a young soldier to his mother. 'When we jumped into their trench, mother, they all held up their hands and shouted 'Camerad, Camerad' and that means 'I give in' in their language. But they had to have it, mother. I think that is all from your loving Albert.'

"…No soldier who fights until his enemy is at close small-arms range, in any war, has more than perhaps a fifty-fifty chance of being granted quarter. If he stands up to surrender he risks being shot with the time-honoured comment, 'Too late, chum.' If he lies low, he will fall victim to the grenades of the mopping-up party, in no mood to take chances."[11]

### *Tactical utility of the bayonet, its use and disuse.*

Speaking of the difficulty that must be overcome in order to kill at close proximity, we would expect that men who've been accustomed to firing at range will not easily transition to the melee of the bayonet charge. And we would be correct in this expectation. It turns out that although much is made of these charges in movies and in popular culture, and although they were indeed an effective instrument on the field in the days of short-range muskets, they did not usually result in mass casualties. More often they resulted in the flight of a demoralized enemy or else attempts at surrender. Richard Holmes puts it concisely: "one side or the other usually recalls an urgent appointment elsewhere before bayonets cross." The soldier who

[11] Richard Holmes, *Acts of war: the behavior of men in battle*.

actually has to experience killing with a bayonet is a relatively rare specimen.

Again, this is truer of modern war but not of the 18th century. Napoleon made much of the bayonet calling it the "chief tool of victory" and saying "I would sooner see a soldier without his breeches than without his bayonet". This faith in cold steel fades as we approach World War I. Even Civil War writers have noted that the bayonet was a tool for psychological combat first and foremost, and perhaps that's all it ever was:

> "The bristling points and the glitter of the bayonets were fearful to look upon as they were levelled in front of a charging line; but they were rarely reddened with blood. The day of the bayonet is passed."[12]

Liddell Hart wrote that trying to continue to use bayonet charges in the face of modern quick-loading weapons was self-defeating:

> "All too many of our men lost their lives in trying to 'close with the bayonet' and 'kill with cold steel' as prescribed, so that they were shot down at close range by cooler-headed opponents who realized that the bullet outreaches the bayonet until the range is closed to less than two yards. More wisely, most of the German troops did not even fix their bayonets, lest the drag should disturb their aim in firing."[13]

Ultimately the bayonet, whenever it actually was effective, was used as the last push, mentally, that would send the enemy forces running or cowering, or else it was a very costly charade intended to accomplish the former. To quote Patton himself:

> "Very few people have ever been killed with the bayonet or the saber, but the fear of having their guts explored with cold steel in the hands of battle-maddened men has won many a fight."[14]

Interestingly, their psychological effect was not only used against the enemy but in favor of those carrying out the charge. In other words, it was believed that men flourishing the bayonet would act more aggressively when equipped with such a terrifying weapon.

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[12] General John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*.
[13] Liddell Hart, *The Memoirs of Captain Liddell Hart*.
[14] The Patton Papers, II.

S.L.A. Marshall says as much in *The Soldier's Load and the Mobility of a Nation*:

> "That weapon ceased to have any major tactical value at about the time the inaccurate and short-range musket was displaced by the rifle. But we have stubbornly clung to it--partly because of tradition which makes it inevitable that all military habits die a slow death, but chiefly because of the superstition that the bayonet makes troops fierce and audacious, and therefore more likely to close with the enemy."

After the advent of rifling, not to mention machine guns, the bayonet could mean salvation but more often it would mean suicide, but this was dependent on the details of the situation. You'd have to be very close to the enemy line with vastly overwhelming numbers if you hoped to charge him before he could reload. Thus Napoleon's sentiment that bayonets were more important than breeches was replaced by the matter of fact observation that "if you were 'close enough to stick 'em, you were close enough to shoot 'em".

### *Authority in the military and in society.*

We will surprise no one by saying that men find it much easier to kill if an authority orders it to be done. Even though that much seems obvious, it warrants further comment.

First, we can refer to the famous experiments of Dr. Stanley Milgram. Milgram set out to test the relationship between conscience and obedience to authority figures. He did this by measuring the willingness of study participants, all men in the age range of 20 to 50, to follow the instructions of an authority figure (in this case a man in a lab coat) in the context of a controlled scientific environment. The subject was told to administer a shock to another participant strapped to a chair (the man in the chair was an actor and received no actual shock). The voltages were increased and the experimenter would see how far he could push the subject, even to the point of administering potentially lethal shocks, and even in the face of pleas for mercy on the part of the 'victim' who would claim to have a heart condition, etc. The outcome was that a very high proportion of subjects would fully obey. In other words, despite obvious severe conflict with conscience, they would follow the instructions of the authority figure to the end.

Whatever we may think this says about man's inhumanity to man, what is important for our study here is the fact that the experimenter (the authority figure) had to repeatedly urge the subject to keep going, and so the willingness of the subject to set aside his sense of decency was entirely dependent on the confident instruction of the authority.

We have already pointed out how difficult it is to get men to kill, and so we can begin to see the importance of the officer in the combat dynamic. The officer plays a fundamental motivating role, in other words. He does not simply advise and direct the action of the men, but in a sense he ensures that the combat takes place.

The example of Christmas on the Western Front, when the two sides posted Christmas trees and spent the day playing games, taking photos, and sharing smokes was a hazard that every officer faced. It was a moment when the almost universal desire *not to have to kill each other* broke through. It terrified command since they were, in the moment, concerned that this kind of camaraderie would take men to a point of conciliation from which they could not be made to return. But through the assertiveness of officers, they did return to the carnage, and that is the lesson.

Authority, or more accurately the necessity of authority, is a healthy result of human nature, that is to say it is a consequence of any sane anthropology. Regarding Milgram's experiments, although the outcomes are usually construed so as to shock us as to how pathetic the voice of conscience is in most individuals, what it actually highlights is the importance for society of an authentic, just, and sane moral authority. Only through moral unity proceeding from a concrete moral authority (traditionally provided by religion, and in medieval Christendom by the Catholic Church specifically) can the individual consciences of society's members be 'formed' to become operative even in the face of evil.

What is true of society in general is true of any institution, and here again the military has preserved an element of the traditional wisdom that modern society at large has discarded entirely: respect for legitimate authority, not just in the abstract, not in the context of ideology, but in the form of a man standing in front of us, acting as a real representative of an authoritative hierarchy. This is not to suggest that all of society ought to be militarized, since obviously the military has its own style of authority that cannot remain healthy outside of its context, but society could certainly benefit from some

framework of moral authority. At this time, it has none whatsoever, only certain abstract values like 'liberty' which of course is a blank check to be filled out and cashed for whatever subjective ends. In other words, society at this time lacks an objective moral authority and considers this one of its greatest accomplishments. In this belief they surrender a basic need and set themselves adrift.

### *Following orders and the necessity of confident command.*

Recruits with no combat experience tend to believe that "being shot at" in battle will be what motivates them to shoot back. Seasoned veterans reply that it is not the taking of fire that motivated them to engage, but the command, from one's officer, to fire back. For those who've been there, "being told to fire" is reportedly what enables them to overcome their own inertia and join the fight.

Chaos always encroaches on the battlefield, and indeed one could say that battle is chaos and it is the will of the officer that encroaches on the chaos, trying to work against it. At any rate, men may still follow orders and engage the enemy in the absence of command, but that absence gives chaos the last word in the moment, and who knows what might ensue. Ardant du Picq in his *Battle Studies* recalls an incident when two detachments, separated from command, met unexpectedly at a distance of only ten paces. Lacking the presence of a leader on both sides, they not only did not fire but proceeded to pick up rocks and throw them at each other and then fled.

We do not mean to suggest that men will always opt for peace in the absence of leadership, and there are plenty of examples of mob violence to refute that naive idea. Men in and of themselves can instigate as well as perpetrate serious violence. Even so, the point is that men, especially men in groups, require confident command in order to keep them on task, in unison, and aiming in the right direction. Every moment of battle is an encounter with unknowns, and every unknown is liable to scatter the detachment that operates in the absence of command.

Authority in the abstract, the idea of an authority, one who gave orders at one time but who is no longer present, is not sufficient. The real *personal presence* of the officer is the key, whereby his commands can be audibly received. In one of Marshall's studies he noted that the firing rate in World War II dropped up to 20 percent

when officers walked away, but most soldiers would take up firing if directly observed by leadership.

Factors that come to bear on obedience can be listed as follows:

First the one mentioned already, which is the proximity of the officer or authority figure (remember the Milgram experiments where the experimenter was just behind the subject to encourage and instruct). Second, respect for the authority figure. There are stories of officers who were either killed or at least "allowed to die" by subordinates who had no respect for them. Third, insistence and intense demand on the part of the officer. Uncertainty in an officer's commands will be reflected in half-hearted obedience. Fourth, the legitimacy of the authority from which the order proceeds. An order from a man on the street mean's nothing to the man he meets on the sidewalk.

### *The Lost Battalion and the burden of command.*

Too often submission to authority is presented in an evil light, and experiments like Milgram's are used to show more or less that authority and submission to authority are evils to be rooted out. We are not shown those examples where obedience to a strong commander resulted in the achievement of noble and courageous ends. It is possible for men to be degraded by obedience but it is equally possible, and for the soldier far more likely, that obedience to authority adds to his nobility and may be the only thing that keeps him alive.

There are countless examples of command that result in courageous victory or noble sacrifice. We could mention the example of Major James Devereux, commander of the U.S. Marines on Wake Island. They held out against unbelievable odds. The last message sent from Devereux's position via telegraph only said: "SEND MORE JAPS". They were overwhelmed, and no one lived to tell the tale. Thus, for the sake of a more detailed example, we will mention the "Lost Battalion" of World War I.

The men were led in this instance by one Major Charles W. Whittlesey. It was October 1918, and the fighting took place in Argonne Forest. Through a series of unfortunate events the US 77th Division composed of 554 men became cut off and isolated in the forest. They suffered incredible hardships. They ran out of food. Water was only accessible by crawling under fire to a nearby stream.

They lost communications. Almost every runner sent by Whittlesey was captured or killed except for one courageous private who snuck through the lines. At one point a friendly artillery barrage was directed right on their position, and they were only saved by a carrier pigeon named *Cher Ami* which delivered a message to call it off. The Germans sent in elite Stormtoopers with flamethrowers to burn them out. 197 men were killed in the action, 150 more went missing or were taken prisoner. After five days the remaining 194 were rescued.

If there was ever a situation that justified surrender, it was theirs, but their commander would not yield and his men followed his example. Whittlesey was given the Medal of Honor.

Yet the story does not have an altogether glorious end. Its conclusion will help us illustrate a second point, which is that strong command has its cost for the one who wields it. In November of 1921, he booked passage from New York to Havana. He dined with the captain and then excused himself. He seemed in good spirits, said witnesses. That night he jumped overboard, and his body was never recovered.

He had prepared a will before his departure, and in it he left the German letter, offering surrender, which he received during the famous battle. It was no mystery why he met this end, as Colonel Averill said in his eulogy that his death "was in reality a battle casualty and that he met his end as much in the line of duty as if he had fallen by a German bullet."

Why did he do it? What burden did the officer carry with him? It is perhaps the burden that all officers carry for their men but not all have to exercise in such an extreme: it is the responsibility for the taking of life. The same authority that makes men fire on the enemy against their inclinations also causes them to die violently. The weight of those decisions falls on the commander personally, in a way that they do not ever fall on the subordinates. It is the very purpose of the military structure to make this so, and to spare men the battle of conscience that would make it impossible to fight in any sizable group.

We have talked about the guilt and sickness that afflicts men who must kill and who have killed up close and personal. What we often forget is that this same sickness afflicts the officer who must give orders that will result in the death of his men, and he must watch

them die. Major Whittlesey and the Lost Battalion are an extreme case not only in terms of the valor of the men but in terms of the weight of leadership suffered by an officer. At every moment it was up to him to give in.

The guilt experienced by an officer must be unimaginable to anyone who has not been through it. The text of the letter mentioned in his will, offered by the Germans, will perhaps give us a hint of the uncertainty that must have overcome him. It was delivered the day before relief arrived. The Germans send forward a blindfolded American POW carrying a white flag and this message:

"The suffering of your wounded men can be heard over here in the German lines, and we are appealing to your humane sentiments to stop. A white flag shown by one of your men will tell us that you agree with these conditions. Please treat Private Lowell R. Hollingshead [the bearer] as an honorable man. He is quite a soldier. We envy you. The German commanding officer."

Unlike the commander at Wake Island, the experience of the Lost Battalion and the "suffering of the wounded" that could be heard even across enemy lines, must have haunted to his end the commander who refused to surrender, who made the carnage continue just a little longer. It is notable that not one of Whittlesey's men ever had a complaint against him, only respect, but that didn't save him since the responsibility was his alone.

***Non-compliance is nearly inconceivable.***

Always look at Nazi Germany with disgust and we tell ourselves, had we been there, we would have been one of the good ones. We, after all, are good people, and that is the end of the question. Such is the naivety of men who've never had to function in the breach, in the extremes of life, where nothing is simple and where the bounds between good and evil become blurred and the voice of conscience is dulled by gunfire, and the only means of survival might be to take solace in *the absolution of group membership*.

To forgo the absolution of the group is to surrender the only thing that makes killing tolerable, the only thing that keeps the horror at bay even in the most noble scenario. If due to poor leadership or false ideology men are led gradually down a path of participation in atrocity they will naturally lean more and more on group absolution and so the thing that is most necessary for their psychological

survival becomes ever more blinding and the more they participate the less likely it is that they will be able to rebel.

Popular song lyrics tell us "freedom isn't free" and we say it ourselves, and we mean that we have to fight for it and die for it but on the level of human experience, in the face of violence and animality, we do not realize how much we oversimplify. We speak of freedom as if it were a political idea, a matter of policy, but if we reflect on freedom as a personal state, as an experiential state, one in which we *take direct responsibility for our actions* and refuse to be absolved from above, by command, or by submerging ourselves in the group, we realize what fate awaits us in that moment of liberation. We may find that the moment we insist on 'freedom' with regard to conscience, and follow that voice instead of some external one, we are congratulated with a bullet to the head.

Glenn Gray tells of one such instance, involving a German soldier who was a member of an execution squad shooting innocent hostages:

> "Suddenly he stepped out of rank and refused to participate in the execution. On the spot he was charged with treason by the officer in charge and was placed with the hostages, where he was promptly executed by his comrades. In an act the soldier has abandoned once and for all the security of the group and exposed himself to the ultimate demands of freedom. He responded in the crucial moment to the voice of conscience and was no longer driven by external commands…we can only guess what must have been the influence of his deed on slayers and slain. At all events, it was surely not slight, and those who hear of the episode cannot fail to be inspired."

### *Accountability and combat.*

Much has been made so far of authority and its necessity in combat, but if we stopped there we would do an injustice to warriors by ignoring a second factor which is *accountability* to one's brothers-in-arms. We mention it second, because when it comes to the military technique for overcoming hesitancy in the moment, authority is the ticket, but on a much more fundamental level, men fight because they believe that if they do not, not only will they die, but their brothers will die. The soldier is responsible for the men fighting next to him.

When the fighting starts it becomes clear that everyone is going to die if everyone doesn't perform their role. This is the reason for the immense sense of responsibility to one's comrades and explains at least as much of the will to fight as does authority or self-preservation. Self-preservation only goes so far, and if that were the only factor it would lead men just as often to hide or to run away. Likewise authority can make men fire but can it really make men fight sincerely, with force of will, the will to kill the enemy? In the last, it is the knowledge that he will let down his comrades and they will die because of his failure that enables him to become *the warrior* and to engage fully in the action, not because he has to, not to merely stay alive, but in order to overcome the threat to his group by violent force.

### *Anonymity and group absolution.*

If the sense of brotherhood fosters accountability, and if this is the most noble expression of warrior camaraderie, there is another factor that comes in to play which may or may not have noble consequences. This factor is *anonymity*.

We have just said that membership in a warrior band entails an immense sense of responsibility to the other members. The flipside of this is a diffusion of responsibility for the acts of the group. Group membership therefore concentrates and diffuses responsibility at one and the same time, depending on the relation. Responsibility is concentrated *with regard to the group* and diffused *with regard to what the group does*.

If the concentration of responsibility is a positive effect of membership, the diffusion of responsibility can be a negative effect since it enables members to avoid feeling the moral weight of what they are doing. Many of the crimes of mobs are examples of this problem. The mob lacks the structure and identity that makes a military unit purposefully responsible, and all that remains is the diffusion of identity alongside an animalistic amplification of whatever feelings are present in the group. As Ben Shalit described in *The Psychology of Conflict and Combat*:

> "All crowding has an intensifying effect. If aggression exists, it will become more so as a result of crowding; if joy exists, it will become intensified by the crowd. It has been shown by some studies…that a mirror in front of an aggressor tends to increase his aggression--if he was disposed to be aggressive. However, if

> this individual were not so disposed, the effect of the mirror would be to further enhance his nonaggressive tendencies. The effect of the crowd seems to be much like a mirror, reflecting each individual's behavior in those around him and thus intensifying the existing pattern of behavior. Besides the mirror effect, the crowd also…has the effect of increasing the anonymity of its members and reducing their responsibility--thus increasing the dehumanization that 'transfers men into beasts.'
>
> "…any police force knows that it is essential to break up a crowd when attempting to control riots, ro when trying to reduce the threat of violent outbreak."
>
> "Aggression escalates from the aim of domination to that of destruction due to a vicious combination of attack remoteness and group cooperation…the individual is not a killer, but the group is."[15]

The individual dissolves into the mob and finds himself committing all manner of crimes once caught up in its motion. These ideas are not new but placed side-by-side with the idea of the military unit as an amplifier of responsibility, what can we make of it?

Ideally the soldier would get the best of both worlds. Based on human responsibility and courage, he would kill for his fellow; based on the fact of 'group absolution' he would be able to live with the horrors his weapons accomplished. He is responsible and at the same time escapes responsibility. As Shalit said above, "The individual is not a killer, but the group is."

Now we can understand more profoundly the emphasis placed on conformity, on following orders regardless of whether they happen to align with one's conscience or not. If one man refuses an order based on conscience, in that act he destroys the benefit of 'group absolution' on which everyone in his presence depends. He attacks the conscience of all by expressing his own. He must be killed, there can be no mercy since to give credibility to his refusal would only make the problem worse. We now understand the power of the non-conformist and also his criminality, since he does not merely go his

[15] Ben Shalit, *The Psychology of Conflict and Combat*, p. 76.

own way, but places the psychological cohesion of the entire group in jeopardy. He does a kind of violence to his own.

### *Mechanical distance and killing.*

Earlier we discussed how technology makes it possible to kill from a greater distance. We noted the spectrum of decreased resistance (from hand-to-hand combat to guided missiles) and ultimately concluded that technology had made killing psychologically easier as well as physically easier due to the gift of distance.

Now we are in a position to discern another aspect of *killing with technology* as it pertains to group anonymity and the diffusion of responsibility gained by participation in a unit.

Individuals who operate as part of a team and who are responsible for managing a *war machine*, such as cannon, artillery, or a machine gun, are not afflicted by the same reservations as men who are alone with their rifles. The 'crew' does not have the same problems of engagement, and there seems to be no question of hesitation in that cooperative context. Just as we noted above that "it is not the individual who kills, but the group" we arrive at a point where it is neither the individual, nor the group, but the machine that takes the life of the enemy. The crew manages the machine. *The soldier becomes the mechanic*.

None other than Napoleon himself noted that artillery was responsible for most of the killing that happened on the field and his victories can in part be attributed to the fact that he made sure to always have more artillery than his opponents. The same is true of machine guns which entered the picture in World War I and exponentially increased the carnage. Was this due only to the obvious? To the increased power of rapid fire stationary weapons? Or is it at least partly a consequence of group absolution, allowing 'operators' to run their machinery without qualms, thereby avoiding the psychological impediments that have always afflicted the soldier alone with his weapon?

### *Moral distance and cultural distance.*

When we come to moral distance as a method for easing the burden of violence, we are in familiar territory and the examples are much easier to produce. We find it easier to kill a monster than a man, and so it is the goal of propaganda (or one of its various goals) to convince the people (who are always potential soldiers) and the

soldiers themselves that the enemy is not quite human, and the easiest way to do this is not to say outright that he is not human but to paint a moral picture of him as a monster. A monster is dehumanized automatically. Not only can a monster be killed without qualms, but he *ought to be killed*. He needs to be killed. It is in the service of humanity that he be killed.

Based on this need, propaganda sets out during peace and war alike to create monsters. A brief review of propaganda posters during any war will suffice to show how we literally succeed, and it is not difficult to find illustrations of some giant beast easting American babies or carrying off American women, the only question is which enemy the beast is supposed to be at any given time.

Currently there is a border dispute between Ukraine and Russia, which historically would have been merely that, but now threatens to become World War III. To our point here, one recent claim was that the Russian leadership was supplying its soldiers with the drug Viagra in order to enable them to rape women in occupied areas. As strange as it is to imagine that blood-lusted soldiers would ever need special drugs in order to perform rape, what is even stranger is that so many people believed it, in spite of the fact that the claim was recycled from a previous (female) UN representative during a different 2011 NATO campaign in Libya. These things stick because virtually anything would stick that meets the following criteria: *it has to be conceivable, it has to be proffered by some authority, and it has to meet the psychological need*. The idea of supplying viagra certainly satisfies all three even if, from a rational point of view, it has all the marks of fabrication.

When we commit violence against an enemy guilty of heinous crime, we are punishing them. Hence the idea of *punishment justification* for war and in the mind of the individual or collective. Here we see why tragedies like 9/11 have great propaganda utility for at least a generation after the event. We can still hear the shouts of "Remember the Alamo!" Sinking ships are especially useful in this regard, as we learned through the sinking of the Maine (Spanish-American War) and the Lusitania (World War I). And the idea of punishment justification as a motivator has not escaped the political class. There have been claims that FDR was aware of a possible attack on Pearl Harbor and chose to ignore it because he was spoiling for a fight with Japan and a successful offensive from them would seal the deal, whereas a foiled attack might not. The validity

of this claim has been called into question but one bombed base was, in the words of one of America's chief cryptographers "a pretty cheap price to pay for unifying the country."

Regarding the Japanese, the task of *distancing* is much easier if the enemy looks much different, or has habits that seem alien to us (whether in reality or in the popular imagination). In other words, cultural differences can be a huge factor in how willing men are to kill each other. Thus, in World War II, surveys showed that people were far more eager to kill a Jap than a Kraut. Whether this was due to more emphasis in propaganda on the latter or due to the fact that Germans out of uniform are almost indistinguishable from Americans is not difficult to answer.

Personal difference (which amounts to killing distance) extends also to ideology. Think of the words 'communist' or 'commie'. Anyone in a movie or a video game that earns one of those titles is pretty much guaranteed to catch a bullet. However, things need not be so specific as that. The terms 'liberty' and 'democracy' and 'way of life' (any of these could mean almost anything) are motivators and that can increase the separation between ourselves and our enemies if we can bring ourselves to believe that they are not in favor of whatever these words mean.

Now we can understand why it is necessary on the level of global politics to claim that your enemy is a criminal, since many of the old non-moral excuses for war have been denied in the modern era. Criminality (moral atrocity) and aggression (requiring self-defense) are now virtually the only reasons a nation is allowed to engage in war. Nothing else is legitimate. Hence the recurring attempts to manufacture atrocity and aggression (for example: weapons of mass destruction in Iraq) in order to justify a war that in the past would have been waged openly for much more practical ends. We will explain this process, and the problems that arise with it, in another section, since here it is leading us to digress.

### *Legal justification.*

Closely connected to moral justification is the use of legal justification. If we are not attacking a criminal who is a monster, at the very least he must still be a criminal. If a breach of justice has not occurred, then we must provoke one or create one.

A third option, as illustrated by the United States in 1776, is to simply rewrite a new law that redesigns the legal paradigm so that you are in the right and your opponent in the wrong. The idea of 'rights' and the sort of legal system that derives from them is very useful for politics, since the rights are interchangeable and open-ended. In other words, 'rights' as a fighting motive can be modified to appeal to virtually any interest group whatsoever, and no one really knows who is respecting them and who isn't. To say it a different way, the rights I have in my mind are contrary to those in your mind, and so everyone is offending everyone else's rights. Thus, we are both sincerely fighting for our rights. If rights are indeed worth dying for, then it is easy enough to get just about anyone to join in a cause so long as you play the right tune. You simply decide who you need to get fired up and you organize your message in such a way as to convince them that the rights they hold dear are precisely the ones at stake. It doesn't matter if there is contradiction involved. The 'rights' held dear by various interest groups are already so contradictory in fact that to respect one right is to offend the next right, and so on.

At any rate, the Declaration of Independence was basically a response to law deemed unjust. It was penned to notify the existing authority that its law was not going to be acknowledged any longer. However arbitrary this might seem (and in fact rights law is almost always arbitrary) it works very well for the purposes of justifying war.

A man needs to feel that he is just, and if he is just and is fighting the unjust, then he is on the 'right side of history' and this contributes to the vast complex of absolving forces in the mind of the one who must kill, not to mention the people (in democratic governments) who must choose to send him to kill.

### *On covering one's head during surrender.*

A bit of advice based on the psychology of killing. Soldiers have reported they found it much easier to kill a helmeted enemy than one who had discarded his helmet. Something about the bare head of a man undoes the dehumanization of the helmet. The same goes for masks.

Thus, the thing to remember is that if ever in combat you find yourself needing to surrender, drop your weapon but also be sure to discard your helmet as well.

Likewise, and undoubtedly related to the above, it is easier to kill a man who has his face covered. Israeli research on hostage situations reported that your chances of dying were drastically increased for hooded victims. Do everything in your power, therefore, to avoid wearing a hood if your life appears to be on the line.

Contrary to the instinct to 'bury one's head in the sand' or shut one's eyes from the threat, the best chance of appealing to the humanity of one's enemy or captor is to become as human as possible.

### *Atrocity and its uses.*

When we speak of atrocity we mean an act of violence on a large scale, over time or all at once, such as in mass slaughter or prolonged projects of genocide. Atrocity transgresses the rules of *jus in bello,* the proper conduct of war. It is excessive either in its moral repugnance or merely on the quantitative level of casualties.

Atrocity is something that happens in war with some regularity, and in peacetime with less regularity but more or less with the same effect, which is either galvanizing, or polarizing, or demoralizing. The psychological effects of atrocity are what make it potentially useful. These effects can be manufactured by attributing atrocity to the enemy, or the effects can be produced in the enemy by perpetrating atrocity against him. If atrocity is not being used strategically but is spontaneous, then it still may have utility but that utility will be in favor of the victim's cause, rarely beneficial to the perpetrator.

In the abstract, and since the very word atrocity invokes feelings of disgust, it is hard to imagine atrocity being instrumentalized, certainly not by the 'good guys'. But in war such lines fade rather quickly and in the era of total war and powerful technology, atrocities are far too easy and present a temptation for both good and evil.

As an example of atrocity being utilized in favor of 'the good' (although of course this is debatable) we could refer to the use of atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There is no conceivable way of avoiding the fact that this was an atrocity, regardless of whether you also call it 'an act of war'. Atrocity it remains. But it was a useful atrocity, and some at the time even presented it as a *necessary* useful atrocity. It did, after all, end the greatest war the world had ever seen. So be it.

As for atrocities that were more clearly on the side of evil, and which served no useful function for the side perpetrating them, we can point to the example of the Holocaust. A different kind of atrocity, no doubt, and one that the German leadership hid as well as they could because they knew that it would not help their cause to put this particular atrocity on display. When the facts did come to light, the Holocaust began to perform its strategic function, which was to unite virtually everyone in the world against Hitler's legacy and Nazism for the rest of history.

Thus, atrocity is a two-edged sword that can decide a conflict either in one's favor or not, depending on its execution. Atrocity can empower, or it can destroy:

> "There are many benefits reaped by those who tap the dark power of atrocity. Those who engage in a policy of atrocity usually strike a bargain that exchanges their future for a brief gain in the present. Though brief, that gain is nonetheless real and powerful. In order to understand the attraction of atrocity, we must understand and clearly acknowledge those benefits that cause individuals, groups, and nations to turn to it."[16]

For the United States, the mass slaughter that was Hiroshima (for we cannot with a straight face refer to it as a 'battle') was worth the cost since it brought Japan to its knees. There were long-term consequences, and we are living those consequences now, not in terms of the academic criticism that has come in hindsight but in terms of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the global standoff they have caused. Short term benefits, however, were desired and achieved.

Another example of strategic atrocity is terrorism in general and 9/11 in particular. We've already noted the strategic use of such an attack. The short term 'victory' was global attention to al-Qaeda's mission and the successful provocation of the United States to become more entangled than ever in foreign wars. The long term defeat was, for bin Laden, his death, but also the continued collapse of the Arab world.

The Mongols are another example of the objective and strategic use of atrocity. If they were forced to besiege a city then they would massacre those who were inside. The only hope of survival was to

[16] Dave Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 209.

give up the city from the start. They made good on their promise of atrocity and their reputation for it saved them much effort.

As for atrocities with 'mixed results' we can recall the firebombing of German cities by the Allies, most notably Dresden and Hamburg. The intent was to terrorize the population to the point of surrender. It did not work, and in hindsight we can see that it did much to solidify public opinion against the Allies, thus playing into Hitler's hands.

Atrocities may also take the form of general policy. For example, soldiers might be discouraged from taking prisoners or they might make rape and murder of non-combatants standard procedures. In this case atrocity as policy almost always backfires and supplies the enemy with unassailable resolve, not to mention the problem it creates within the ranks of the perpetrators. There is group absolution but nonetheless, especially if men are convinced that their cause is just, they cannot long endure the cognitive dissonance that comes from committing atrocity *up close and personal* and still believe they are on the side of goodness.

### *What happened to soldiers in Vietnam?*

We noted at the outset that according to Marshall, firing rates in World War II could have been as low as 20 percent. Many soldiers in many encounters were not particularly interested in attempting to kill the enemy, and they expressed this hesitancy by choosing to find other things to do during combat or else by firing high. From what we can surmise from examples like the discarded muskets at Gettysburg, the situation must have been similar. Even if we doubt that somewhat shocking figure, we can proceed to the Korean War and see that matters were somewhat improved to 50 percent firing rates. By the time we reach Vietnam, firing rates are close to 95 percent. Why? What changed?

The answer lies mostly in the new approaches to training. Having glimpsed the possibility of doubling or quadrupling the strength of its infantry by the simple fact of getting everyone who was there to use their weapons, the military training programs set out to achieve precisely that goal. And they did, but at a cost.

The sophisticated conditioning techniques were able to overcome the barriers to killing that had previously remained intact even in battle. They had, at the same time, opened men who would

otherwise never experience killing to the possibility of the trauma that *must follow in the wake of the act of killing*. They planned for the killing, but they unwittingly exposed these same men to unprecedented levels of trauma. In the aftermath, there was virtually an epidemic of trauma, which came to be identified as PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder). It seemed to have come out of nowhere, but in fact it was merely the unintended consequence of making every man a killer.

We can now understand the power of the techniques used at Parris Island, the chants used to desensitize recruits, to teach them to "KILL, KILL, KILL" and to consider themselves killing machines. Desensitization is of course only to scratch the surface. The second course, and much deeper, is the implementation of Pavlovian and Skinnerian conditioning techniques, of which U.S. Army and USMC training is but an adaptation. The situation that will occur in combat is reproduced in training as closely as possible, whether by moving targets that produce immediate feedback or by carrying out training in full gear, while the positive reinforcement is provided by the DI and the system of rewards and punishments that accompany the recruit throughout his training. Everything is a dress rehearsal for the real deal. The more realistic, the better.

All of this seems obvious now, and we wonder why we ever would have trained soldiers on those old-fashioned bullseye targets instead of one shaped like a man, but hindsight is what it is.

After desensitization to killing, training actually offers the recruit an alternative vocabulary (since again, desensitization is not enough to produce a good 'reflex kill'). Terms like 'engaged enemy' are used rather than 'killed enemy'.

In other words we have implemented a kind of psychological warfare against our own in order to render them more effective on the battlefield. Soldiers know this, however, and are thankful for it, because after all it keeps them alive. One veteran, when these explanations were offered to him, described it as being 'programmed to kill'. A CIA interrogator actually described it as a process of brainwashing.

Could we blame the appearance of PTSD on this phenomenon alone? Perhaps not. Vietnam provided ample opportunities for novel trauma in combat. Still, it had to have had its effect. It has even been suggested that by so thoroughly removing the barriers to

killing, and by driving the 'killer' mentality so deeply into the psyche of recruits, we may have caused men to share the guilt and trauma of being killers who had not even killed anyone.

### *Vietnam and the impossibility of reconciling the experience.*

Vietnam presented soldiers with serious problems on three fronts: first, the use of new conditioning techniques for which he was thankful but which opened him up to levels of experience unnatural to all but the born killer; second, the environment of Vietnam and the conduct of the enemy were unlike what we'd experienced; third, the homecoming was not exactly friendly, and this made rationalizing, accepting, and healing almost impossible for those who returned. The actual tactical novelties of guerilla warfare are discussed elsewhere. Here we only wish to enumerate the psychological factors that were unique to combat in Vietnam and those faced by the veteran upon his return home.

We can begin by recalling the various forms of support available to soldiers of previous wars, which would probably be considered 'normal' throughout history. We can then acknowledge the tragic fact that the United States soldier in Vietnam was deprived of each and every one of these supports. In some cases, the 'support' was not only absent but actually inverted and became a hostile force toward the soldier.

> *Support 1: The guidance and reassurance of older men, probably officers, to model soldierly life and provide someone to admire. This also has the effect of showing soldiers that there is a future, and a proud one, ahead of them.*

In Vietnam the military had finally realized that it was better to get men young, when they were as malleable as possible. The soldiers in Vietnam were younger in general than in any previous war, and there was a serious shortage of older officers to guide them. "They were teenagers leading teenagers in a war of endless small-unit operations, trapped together in a real-world reenactment of *The Lord of the Flies* with guns."[17]

> *Support 2: Codes of honor, on the battlefield and away from it. Only in the most horrific of wars have the norms of combat*

[17] Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 267.

> *been totally discarded. Certain acts and categories of persons have always been off limits, and even your hated enemy could be counted on not to transgress certain limits in war.*

Anyone who has read anything about Vietnam knows what horrible events transpired. How soldiers who only wished to be respected and to respect themselves and to fight for a good cause were forced to shoot men in common clothes right in front of their children. In some cases they were forced to shoot the children, since some of them had guns and used them. The VC would train them to throw grenades not so much because this was effective in killing but because it forced the Americans to shoot them, and once you shoot a child with a grenade the grenade detonates next to the body, and now the soldier is faced with a mangled child corpse. That is the type of enemy they were facing. Once the norms of combat are abandoned it takes a heroic will, which not all men can be expected to possess, in order not to degrade oneself and commit crimes, to answer evil with evil.

> *Support 3: Lasting relationships. In spite of the prospect of an early death, there have always been soldiers who bonded through their trials and this bond may have lasted throughout years in the field and until old age.*

Because of the 12-month 'tour' format the soldiers found great difficulty in bonding with comrades. When you were new, you could expect to be treated as new, and after the normal period of adjustment and building respect, those who were there when you arrived and now respected you were leaving. You were then given fresh recruits and now you had to help them adjust. It takes time to bond but no one wants to bond when everyone is either a short-timer, about to disappear, or else an FNG (f__ing new guy). It is normal to hear Vietnam veterans talk about how something can only be understood by someone who was there, but at the same time, as a group, they are far less able to turn to others 'who were there' which is demonstrated in surveys by the lack of letters sent between veterans of that war compared to others, and the choice not to keep in touch by whatever means. It seems that the tour format, which forced men to leave their fellows behind abruptly, disturbed some individuals so much that they have always avoided reconnecting with those who stayed behind. The Vietnam veteran feels that he abandoned everyone when he was called home, and he doesn't want to find out what transpired after his departure.

Something else that made the experience new was the use, at scale, of pharmaceutical products to help soldiers cope. Vietnam was the first war where soldiers were routinely prescribed tranquilizers and drugs. Matters were certainly not helped by the infamous drug problem. Many turned to marijuana or more serious drugs like opium or heroin, to ease the pain, and self-medication as a coping mechanism does not just go away when the war stops.

Drugs of this type do not cure anything, they only numb the pain, and in a way they exemplify the problem in Vietnam since they merely *delayed the issue* that was later to become apparent.

> *Support 4: If the war is won, or a compromise reached, they may have the pride of having accomplished something, the reassurance that it was not all for nothing. The respect of the people who would acknowledge more or less what they had done, the sacrifices they had made, and who would show unconditional appreciation for them in their home communities and society in general.*

Veterans of Vietnam were assured that they lost, that if they accomplished anything it was a criminal assault. In that sense it was less than nothing. They were spat upon and ridiculed from the moment they stepped off the planes. They often chose not to wear medals that previously would have been literal badges of honor, for fear of attracting negative attention.

### *The absence of expiation rituals in secular society.*

Aside from the social and environmental factors that made Vietnam a hell for soldiers, we can also mention the problem of expiation rituals. We thought it necessary to address this topic separately since all modern soldiers in general, and not just Vietnam veterans, are deprived of it, and it is perhaps the most powerful antidote to guilt and the trauma of violence that a man could turn to his favor. In modern secular civilization, religion is relegated to an expression of private emotions and has nothing 'official' about it and little to say about something so worldly as war.

Richard Gabriel wrote of this need and its historical provision:

> "Societies have always recognized that war changes men, that they are not the same after they return. That is why primitive societies often require soldiers to perform purification rites

> before allowing them to rejoin their communities. These rites often involved washing or other forms of ceremonial cleansing. Psychologically, these rituals provided soldiers with a way of ridding themselves of stress and the terrible guilt that always accompanies the sane after war. It was also a way of treating guilt by providing a mechanism through which fighting men could decompress and relive their terror without feeling weak or exposed. Finally, it was a way of telling the soldier that what he did was right and that the community for which he fought was grateful and that, above all, his community of sane and normal men welcomed him back...
>
> When soldiers are denied these rituals they often tend to become emotionally disturbed. Unable to purge their guilt or be reassured that what they did was right, they turned their emotions inward. Soldiers returning from the Vietnam War were victims of this kind of neglect. There were no long troopship voyages where they could confide in their comrades. Instead, soldiers who had finished their tour of duty were flown home to arrive 'back in the world' often within days, and sometimes within hours, of their last combat with the enemy. There were no fellow soldiers to meet them and to serve as a sympathetic sounding board for their experiences; no one to convince them of their own sanity."[18]

Obviously the sane and responsible support of society is a necessary context for healing, but expiation rituals manifest externally through actions and words the deeper healing that must be experienced by the individual. Traditionally it was the responsibility of the religions to provide such rituals, but in a secular society they are considered ridiculous, ineffective, and at any rate unwelcome. The rituals are still available in Catholicism, to take one example, which offers structured opportunities for spiritual cleansing for sins of any magnitude, but even for practicing Catholics these rituals are misunderstood and have fallen into disuse. Priests must bring reading material to their time in the confessional, where they wait in silence for penitents who never come.

### *PTSD as the legacy of Vietnam.*

Post-traumatic stress disorder is not new. There are cases going back as far as we know, and the only reason it became prominent

[18] Cited in Grossman, *On Killing*.

and has become connected in the popular mind with Vietnam is due to the scale of the problem, which in the aftermath of that war was unprecedented.

What Vietnam taught us is that there are consequences to the actions we ask our soldiers to perform on behalf of society. These consequences cannot be set aside, ignored, or forgotten merely because the campaign was a nightmare and came to no good end. If it was a national embarrassment, all the more do the veterans, who were on orders from the United States government, need the reassurance that they themselves are not villains, nor is the defeat theirs to own, rather insofar as they performed their duties, they, as soldiers, retained as much dignity as we could expect. It is the decision makers of the state who ought to suffer the consequences of such a debacle. But those who depend on votes are not accustomed to taking responsibility for their failures if they can avoid it:

> "Vietnam was an American nightmare that hasn't yet ended for veterans of the war. In the rush to forget the debacle that became our longest war, America found it necessary to conjure up a scapegoat and transferred the heavy burden of blame onto the shoulders of the Vietnam veteran. It's been a crushing weight for them to carry. Rejected by the nation that sent them off to war, the veterans have been plagued with guilt and resentment which has created an identity crisis unknown to veterans of previous wars."

In essence, PTSD is defined as "a reaction to a psychologically traumatic event outside the range of normal experience." This is, again, why it is so important to assure soldiers of the legitimacy of their actions, so that they do not feel like freaks or monsters. Obviously their experiences are "outside the range of normal experience" but the only way to help them recover is to show them that they still fit into the normal world.

If a man is traumatized and then berated for his trauma, the trauma is increased exponentially. If Vietnam exposed soldiers to situations of trauma that were outside the norm even for soldiers, the society to which they returned then proceeded to multiply their sufferings through denial and condemnation.

Add to that the abnormal conditioning to which these men were subjected during training, which was undoubtedly willed by them

since necessary in order to help them perform their duties, but which set them up for failure when it was all over. The same system that implemented these techniques did not understand that by altering the psychological makeup of the soldier it would have to treat that soldier differently, even going to great lengths to manage the consequences that would arise, not all of them good, from these manipulations.

Vietnam can then be seen as a perfect breeding ground for PTSD, through a kind of formula: extremely traumatic forms of violence + operant conditioning that desensitizes and meddles with emotional processes + a homecoming where he is met with condemnation and insult.

In conclusion we will offer the summary remarks of Dave Grossman in *On Killing*:

> "We may have enhanced the killing ability of the average soldier through training (that is, conditioning), but at what price? The ultimate cost of our body counts in Vietnam has been, and continues to be, much more than dollars and lives. We can, and have, conditioned soldiers to kill--they are eager and willing and trust our commands. But in doing so we have not made them capable of handling the moral and social burdens of these acts, and we have a moral responsibility to consider the long-term effects of our commands. Moral direction and philosophical guidance, based on a firm understanding of the processes involved, must come with the combat training and deployment of our soldiers...At the national strategic level, a recognition of the potential social cost of modern warfare has been obtained at a terrible price..."[19]

### ***Doctrines that attempt to prevent another Vietnam, and their futility.***

In a speech entitled "The Uses of Military Power", the U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger disclosed principles that came to be known as the "Weinberger Doctrine" and were presumably intended to preventing another Vietnam by setting criteria that must be met in order to justify a campaign:

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[19] Dave Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 295.

The Weinberger Doctrine asserts that:

*--The United States should not commit forces to combat unless the vital national interests of the United States or its allies are involved.*

*--U.S. troops should only be committed wholeheartedly and with the clear intention of winning. Otherwise, troops should not be committed.*

*--U.S. combat troops should be committed only with clearly defined political and military objectives and with the capacity to accomplish those objectives.*

*--The relationship between the objectives and the size and composition of the forces committed should be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary.*

*--U.S. troops should not be committed to battle without a "reasonable assurance" of the support of U.S. public opinion and Congress.*

*--The commitment of U.S. troops should be considered only as a last resort.*

Note the emphasis on popular support. Another version of military 'doctrine' is connected with Colin Powell in the early 90s, and offers a series of questions that must be answered affirmatively to justify war:

*--Is a vital national security interest threatened?*

*--Do we have a clear attainable objective?*

*--Have the risks and costs been fully and frankly analyzed?*

*--Have all other non-violent policy means been fully exhausted?*

*--Is there a plausible exit strategy to avoid endless entanglement?*

*--Have the consequences of our action been fully considered?*

*--Is the action supported by the American people?*

*--Do we have genuine broad international support?*

If the first set of points had the aftermath of Vietnam in view, the second set of points had in view the Gulf War. Neither could have foreseen the events of 9/11, which in practice allowed President Bush to throw every moderating principle out the window and pursue any cause anywhere for however long it might take, unilaterally and without regard to international or domestic support.

Note also the use of the term “interest” in both doctrines. This is a very loaded, even if vague, term that we will explore a bit more in sections below that discuss contemporary military issues. For now we wish to point out only that it is a product of modern nation state policy and isn’t something that we would have encountered much prior to the 18th century. It is the concept of interest that denotes the center of concern and motive for military action in the last two centuries, and it tends to overrun any ‘principle’ placed in its way.

# WOMEN IN COMBAT

♦♦♦

### *The myth of the female warrior.*

War is the vocation of men and virtually every counter-example can be seen as either the result of extreme or unusual circumstance, or else as the artificial product of 'progressive' or feminist fantasy.

Ironically, some of the well-known pop cultural warrior women are clearly the product of the male imagination, namely the Hollywood 'warrior princess' who combines her poorly choreographed combat shenanigans with specially designed costumes that emphasize cleavage, bare legs, or at least skin tight leather that accentuates every feminine curve. This applies to early fantasy flicks like *Sheena* or *Red Sonja*, but even those slightly less sexualized characters, like *Xena: Warrior Princess*, can be seen by any but the most superficial eyes as a product of play that still retains erotic overtones, and not a result of any serious respect for the female character's capacity for violence.

Other less ridiculous examples are clearly written as part of a political agenda and focus less on the realities of the narrative than on inspirational character accomplishments. Here we are thinking of GI Jane. The 'strong woman' has become a formula used in Hollywood whenever they need to present an 'empowering' female protagonist that 'defies expectations' and achieves her dreams. Her dreams, inevitably, are to do what the men are doing. Fathers, husbands, brothers all demonstrate their blindness to her potential. She has to prove herself to men who are inevitably incompetent. The heroine always knows better than the men how to do the job that they've been doing for generations. A famous instance (aimed more at children than adults but following the same formula) would be Mulan, who repeatedly outdoes the men around her in both physical feats and high strategy. In the end, everyone learns a lesson, which is that the men were wrong. Even the 'weak father' has become a stock character now, who in Mulan's case was actually ill but in most narratives is not merely weak but often morally offensive, probably an abusive alcoholic, or is at best so spineless that he is a narrative non-entity.

Again we can mention GI Jane, which was aimed at adult audiences and follows a similar formula. The trial involves our heroine taking on the chauvinist United States military system and winning the respect of her male antagonists by telling them to 'suck her dick'. As absurd as the line seems now, it was very much a product of its time and proved inspirational to some audiences.

Recently there have been a string of Wonder Woman movies, which have brought the myth of the Amazons back into the popular consciousness. There are still people who talk as if the Amazons were not a mythical creation and believe that they were indeed a real society. This is not surprising since modern audiences have no concept of the myth, and usually if there is anything true in a myth they take it to be based on some historical episode. This has led some to suggest that although there is no evidence of Amazons, per se, the stories *must have been* inspired by great female warriors that existed somewhere in some form.

### *Women commanders.*

Women commanders are often used as evidence that war can be the business of women just as much as men, but the truth is that to command and to fight are not the same thing. Who would argue that the 'commander-in-chief' of the United States, who at this moment can barely remember where he is or what he was supposed to say next, is a soldier just because he is in a position of command?

It is true that typically, and traditionally, those who command the armies are a part of that army, and there are instances of women taking on that role, but the modern era of nation states has seen its leaders distance themselves more and more from the battlefield. They now command by proxy. In the past, a king or an emperor could in many cases be called a commander by his presence on the field, even in the midst of the action.

Feminists and proponents of women in combat point to the historical fact of women commanders as evidence in support of their position, but this is to misunderstand the issue, since no one debates the existence of strong female leaders at various points in history, usually in cases where leadership was hereditary and no sons were born to a king before he died. Numerous females appear on the throne in the 18th century alone, and we might have respect for names like Austria's Maria Theresa, but these royal ladies, even if they appeared before an army like Queen Elizabeth to deliver a

stirring speech, did not supervise military operations in any direct way, and their presence would have hovered at the level of 'grand strategy' and more within the domain of statesmanship and politics than military strategy:

> "Like Maria Theresa in the eighteenth century, Israel's Golda Meir, India's Indira Gandhi and Britain's Margaret Thatcher all found themselves in charge of their countries' affairs at wartime. As such, they were responsible for making critically important military-political decisions under enormous stress. On the other hand, none of them had any military knowledge or experience to speak of. This even applied to Ms Meir as prime minister of the only county in history that has conscripted women…On the morning of 6 October 1973 she was called upon to decide whether to mobilize either two or four reserve divisions; whereupon, as she subsequently admitted, it turned out she did not know exactly what a division was. Throughout the war she was surrounded exclusively by male advisers such as the minister of defence, the chief of staff, the chief of intelligence, and so on. As far as military operations are concerned, if her advice was asked at all…it was pure formality."[1]

Unless society goes to great lengths to rule out the possibility of any female ever ruling, it eventually have a female ruler, even if she represents an exception. That changes nothing about the nature of war, nor does it suggest that the military has become egalitarian.

### *Women as revolutionaries.*

One of the pet fallacies of progressive types, obsessed as they are with overturning norms, is to fixate on the exception and to ignore all evidence in favor of the rule. Even the smallest exception, for them, claims equality with the rule, and an entire system discerned over centuries can, in their eyes, be discarded if we can but demonstrate that it did not account for a single fragmentary fact.

These exceptionalists see actions carried out *in desperation* and they seem to think that if something *can be done in the extreme*, then there is no argument that it *should not be done outside the extreme*. In other words, if something can be done in an emergency,

[1] Martin Creveld, *Men, Women and War*, p. 78.

then why shouldn't we be able to do it *at will*. If a woman somewhere overcame a man in physical combat, there is no reason women shouldn't be pitted against men in physical combat generally. All other factors fall before the exception. The one fact that by right reason ought to have been discarded becomes the only one that matters. Exceptions can help us to qualify our rules, or to better understand them, but the exception does not do away with the rule. In most cases, it highlights its urgency.

If there is an exception to the rule that war is the business of men, we find it in the various resistance movements that have grown up everywhere throughout history: revolutions, revolts, uprisings, and insurgencies. In each of these we find women planting bombs, gathering intelligence, bravely participating in espionage, enduring interrogation and torture (although usually in a lessened form than whatever is applied to men), and facing the hardships that accompany such conflicts (although male comrades typically go out of their way to lighten the load for females present). Often today, when someone wants to demonstrate that women can and do fight as well as men, we are shown a photo of some 'freedom fighters' with a woman in their midst.

The first thing to be said of these examples is that some are authentic but even here there are fabrications and exaggerations. There are stories about women spies who exchange sexual favors for state secrets, the *femme fatale*. These are basically myths. Imaginary stories that titillate the audience, even more so because they seem believable. Even the famous 'historical' example of Mata Hari, the exotic dancer who was executed by firing squad as a German spy, has now been explained as a matter of scapegoating on the part of the French Army, and the evidence against her may have been falsified. In other words, the very myth of the *femme fatale* led to the instrumentalization of a beautiful woman for the purposes of war. She was a spectacle, but may not have been an actual participant in any intelligence operation.

Regardless, what we have in mind here are the authentic roles played by women in insurgencies, uprisings, and revolutions. What female participation in these instances means is only that in the extreme situation of 'home defense' women are able and willing to pick up a firearm and repel the invader. Obviously we are dealing with exceptional circumstances. For that matter, a child might also pick up a firearm in desperation, but is that an argument in favor of child participation in conventional war? Nor would any sane person

suggest that outside of that momentary extreme, and once the danger has passed, the gun should not be immediately removed from the child's hands. In other words, outside of the extreme, all of the factors that reinforce and justify the norm must be allowed to determine policy. That is why, in revolutions, women almost never retain their active and exposed roles once the dust has settled. They return to their vocations, whatever they may be. Add to all of these observations the fact that even in the resistance movements we know of, the leadership is still almost exclusively male, and participation of the sexes is just as lopsided as we would guess, and for good reason.

The point is not to patronize women as if they were children. We have already said that under these desperate circumstances women shine in their resilience and bravery, perhaps even outshining some of their men. In other words, *they can fight*, if by saying 'can' we understand the admission of a possibility. Yet as we said above, 'can' pertains to the possible, and is not a synonym for 'should'. What can be done and what should be done under normal circumstances are different things. Whatever actions occur as a matter of the struggle for a people's very existence cannot be interpreted as normative. The exceptional nature of these events does nothing to overturn the millennia of experience in favor of the view that war is the business of men.

The claim that women *can* fight, and *have* fought, but nonetheless *should not* fight, was more or less self-evident in the past. Today it requires demonstration, and even that is not enough. Even so, we will provide some of the evidence in favor of the traditional norm in the pages that follow.

### *The weaker vessel.*

We can take as a starting point the New Testament command to husbands, that with regard to their wives they ought to "dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor to the female as to the weaker vessel." (1 Peter 3:7)

Although it was obviously self-evident for men at this time to consider their wives 'weaker' in relation to themselves, we can add that this weakness was to be met 'according to knowledge' which is to say, it is an affront to ignore the relative weakness, or to approach it with false reasoning.

Of what does this 'weakness' consist? We need not delve into the lofty subjects of 'spiritual dignity' nor is this a question that can be answered in the vocabulary of political philosophy, which today is used to muddy even the clearest of waters. We can start at the most superficial level, the level of physical strength, and this is appropriate since 'strength' and 'weakness' in combat are expressed by physical force.

Women are limited by lifecycle in a way that men are not. The potential for pregnancy, and pregnancy in the context of marriage as a desirable goal, meant that women were married instead of recruited. In most periods and in most cultures, even if they had been allowed in the army, they would usually have been married off prior to eligibility, since the age of marriage came earlier. Even in Europe, where a later marriage age became common and might not occur until the late teens or early twenties, it fell right around the age when military training became a possibility. Marriage was followed by pregnancy. In many cases pregnancy preceded marriage. The rest would have spoken for itself: the children had to be raised, they had a right to be raised, after all, and this corresponded to the duty of the mother to raise the child born from her.

Pregnancy makes heavy demands on the body, requiring higher calorie intake and reduced capacity for exertion. The infant, once born, must be fed, and this means that the mother still requires an elevated calorie intake, possibly for years after the child is born. Once the child was weaned, cycles would return, and so would pregnancy, and this time the mother would have a toddler to grapple with in addition to the condition of being pregnant. Again, all of this is obvious in the limits it implies for military service, but it needs mentioning since we currently live in an era of voluntary sterility and so these facts of life are easily forgotten.

In addition to the bearing of children and the handling of their care, women's absence from battlefields throughout history is explained by the fact that as a group, women are just plain physically weaker than men, and this has been demonstrated time and again by studies, tests, and hard experience.

Men are larger, and this alone would account for the discrepancy in physical strength. One study of US Army recruits found that female recruits were 30 lbs lighter and almost 5 inches shorter than male recruits on average. Any man who has ever been in a physical

confrontation with another person can attest to the fact that 30 lbs and 5 inches, all other things being equal, guarantees the outcome. Sports like wrestling, where the central test involves the use of physical force, are divided into intervals of only 6 lbs. To put a wrestler against an opponent 30 lbs heavier would be a joke.

If we shift from measurements to strength testing,female recruits had only 55 percent of the upper body strength, 72 percent of the lower body strength as compared to the average male recruit. Even when experiments are adjusted for discrepancies like height, women at best only display 80 percent of the strength of men. In some tests that focus on upper body strength in particular, the gap widens to an extreme. For example, at the bench press men displayed 270 percent more power and with regard to endurance were able to perform 473 percent more work. One biologist concluded that only the upper 5 percent of women were equal to the median male.

In tests among ROTC cadets, 78 percent of men were able to run 2 miles in under 14 minutes. Among women, the number dropped to 6 percent.

This is partly due to body composition. Women have more body fat than men and less muscle mass. While this is beneficial in the context of child-rearing it is a detriment to strenuous physical challenges in a military setting. Fat percentage has a significant impact on both aerobic capacity and heat tolerance. Higher fat means lower aerobic capacity, which means less oxygen available to the muscles, which limits ability to perform muscular work. Heat tolerance refers to the body's ability to regulate its temperature in the face of high heat environments. Fat tissue is an insulator that prevents heat from escaping the body, leading to increased risk of heat stress and its various symptoms: nausea, fatigue, dizziness.

Needless to say, all of this combines to place women at a significant disadvantage on hikes under a heavy load in high heat. Some would say that placing women in this situation borders on the kind of irresponsibility warned against in the Bible passage about dealing with women 'according to knowledge' since on the contrary it ignores certain obvious facts in a way that endangers the weaker sex. Nor are examples of dangerous consequences lacking. The first woman to gain access (via lawsuit) to The Citadel against its male-only policy dropped out after experiencing heat stress on the first day of 'hell week'.

The less obvious factors that disadvantage women could be multiplied almost indefinitely. Women have lower bone density than men, which makes the female skeleton less resilient to blows. A thinner skull means more susceptibility to concussions or worse. A weaker jaw means a broken jaw in a collision.

Women also have breasts, as ridiculous as it feels to have to point that out, and breasts are an impediment to the performance of some physical challenges and must be specifically addressed. Breasts require special protection due to their anatomical position.

Women have shorter arms, which has at times required additional adjustments to standard pieces of equipment, not to mention the fact that it limits throwing ability. The inability of women to throw as far as men becomes more pronounced as the weight of the object is increased. We do not need to explain how this could be problematic for the use of grenades.

Such pronounced differences cannot be ignored with impunity, but ignored they were, and women were forcibly inserted into the armed forces of all developed countries, first into non-combat roles and now into every role almost without exception. The aftermath was as predictable as it was unpleasant.

### *Weakness in action.*

Sometimes it is argued that modern technology has made war less physically demanding. For example, it is suggested that the universal adoption of firearms (which merely require the user to manipulate the trigger) and the irrelevance of armor have meant that male strength is no longer an absolute necessity in combat. Anyone who argues in this way only demonstrates that he has never carried a rifle for very long, because rifles, although lighter today than ever before, can still present a problem. Nor has armor truly been set aside. In urban warfare a soldier could be burdened with 30-40lbs of armor, which might include a ballistic helmet, plate carrier, front and back hard plates, and some combination of auxiliary pieces for groin, thigh, shoulder, or stomach protection. None of this even touches on the problems of endurance and heat and the fact that one must also usually work and carry objects while encumbered. Mechanical transport has made marches less demanding and less frequent and shorter in duration, but marches still occur. As recently as 1914, German soldiers carried 65 lbs of gear as a norm, and Russians carried as much as 80 lbs. If we fast

forward to the modern conflicts, in 1999 the Marines in Kosovo who were part of 'Force 21' could barely move under the weight of 60 lbs.

The point of all this is that it is unwise to base decisions on optimistic figures about how light a load might be under the best of conditions, when everything is going well. War is the domain of uncertainty, more than any other human endeavor, and it is not so much that we could not plan for female participation, but that when plans break down and the loads increase, the unit is only as strong as its weakest link.

### *Female participation extinguishes the glory of male pursuits.*

We have remarked elsewhere that male pursuits, insofar as they are driven in the spirit of masculinity, which is to say, for the glory and for individual distinction, they are degraded whenever women enter the field. This goes as much for the professions as for recreational activities such as athletics.

Even a sport so traditionally masculine as wrestling has now been opened to women. The initial result was the forcible insertion of girls into boys programs and tournaments. Boys would find, to their dismay, that the next match was to be against a girl. In other words, they were supposed to act in a way that contradicted everything in their entire education. To make men face off against women in such an intimate physical contest is a kind of psychological abuse since it confuses the mind and instincts. Although the awkwardness of the moment will typically extinguish the possibility of arousal, arousal is not excluded and woe to the poor man who, writhing around on top of a female for several minutes, responds physiologically in precisely the way we might expect. Even if no one else shames him, he will shame himself. Again, this is a kind of abuse. All because of the ideological idiocy of adults who have in various ways mangled youth sports beyond use.

Beyond the psychological and emotional problems that ensue, there is another problem of a different order: what men were to gain by victory against men, which is glory, is neutralized if women are involved. This is because there is no honor in victory over a weaker opponent, but there is certainly dishonor in being defeated by one. Thus, when women demand to participate, men are effectively disenfranchised.

On the whole, there are two consequences that follow when women gain entrance to a male field: 1) the men leave, or at least they participate at a lower rate. 2) the appreciation or honor shown by society to that activity is decreased. This can be demonstrated in the economic field, where the professions that were male were overwhelmed by women who, gaining access and willing to do the same job for less money, caused men to find other careers.

Modern people do not understand that it is not a hatred of women or greed for more money that drives these behaviors, but the desire for a reward that can only be obtained when one enters into competition against another man, which is to say, one who is equal and perhaps even more powerful than oneself.

Women will struggle to understand this dynamic because young women, as opposed to young men, do not necessarily have to seek out external trials in order to 'become women'. Girls become women first and foremost by becoming mothers. There is no 'right of initiation' into adulthood that is more natural and more profound, and this can happen to a woman even through carelessness. This is not to say that childless women are not women, but only that for the female sex, nature shows the way. For men it is not the same. Men cannot experience such a rite, and so they must create one, and much of what is seen as absurd and 'toxic' male behavior is the blind pursuit of initiation in the absence of the traditional framework that would have provided it.

Masculinity is not asserted in the natural course of events, it must assert itself, and then reassert itself. Hence the insistence on establishing and maintaining strictly male pursuits, since an activity that serves as 'initiatory' for men is destroyed as soon as women walk into the room. This brings us to the field of war, which for men presents not only the opportunity for supreme glory, but also an unequaled path for initiation into manhood, one that can be asserted and reasserted:

> "Of all the activities in which humans engage, obviously no other is nearly as suited for asserting masculinity than is war. All the rest are hedged in by more or less artificial limits on what may and may not be done; in war alone those limits do not apply. War allows, even demands, the most complete use of all man's faculties, physical as well as emotional and intellectual. It thus represents the one great

> opportunity for the human personality to unfold itself to the full…"[2]

### *Men won't surrender to women.*

Israeli officers no longer placed women in combat after 1948 and this decision was based on all of the obvious observations that one would expect to have prevailed at that time. However, to additional insights are mentioned in books on the subject:

First, there were instances of uncontrolled and exaggerated violence by men when one of their own women was injured or killed. Responsibility to a man is one thing but the responsibility to protect a woman is something else entirely, and the two levels of aggression do not mix well in the male psyche, leading to unpredictable outcomes. To take a simple example, if a comrade is killed in combat there is a desire for payback and there is no shortage of examples of outbursts based on this desire, but it works within limits and between all male competitive efforts there is a mutual respect or limit on what follows. But who on earth would expect a man to limit his aggression after his wife has been murdered, or any female who was personally under his protection? Such a situation gets to the deepest core of male aggression and although female soldiers are not legally the wives of the male soldiers around them, it is naive to pretend that these levels of masculine protectiveness do not come into play.

Second, it should be obvious that men will find it much more difficult to surrender to women in battle. They also find it difficult to submit to their authority, which is why they aren't usually allowed to command men, but that is a separate subject. This reluctance was demonstrated by the Arabs in particular, who would refuse to surrender if they knew women were on the other side. We could be dismissive and say that this was because Arabs are sexist, but the fact remains that most men, regardless of egalitarian background, would have issues with it. Many would sooner die than suffer defeat and show submission before women. An enemy that won't surrender at the point at which defeat becomes inevitable not only forfeits his own life but also demands more sacrifice on the part of the victor, who now must lay siege and continue his assault in order to complete the inevitable victory. No one benefits by an enemy having extra incentive not to surrender, and that is why traditionally

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[2] Martin Creveld, *Men, Women and War*, p. 163.

offers of surrender terms are punctuated by compliments assuring the defeated party that they fought courageously, etc., so that they can retain their dignity as far as possible.

### *Social prestige of activities diminishes as women enter into them.*

The social prestige of certain activities and professions diminishes to the extent that they become feminized. This happens so reliably that it almost appears to be a sociological law.

Take as the most obvious example popular sports. Everyone is continuously befuddled as to why male sports stars are national heroes whereas women, comparatively speaking, can go unknown. Women's sports as a separate category always draws smaller crowds. Professional sports are also an excellent example of how the proliferation of women into a field does not guarantee that it will close 'the pay gap'. If basketball becomes 'women's basketball' then it ceases to draw advertisers, sponsors, and audiences, and so it makes no money, and so its players are not paid well. Another way of putting it is to say that women's sports cannot command the *social prestige* that men's sports have always been able to achieve. In their total failure to understand the process, feminists regularly rage about equal pay, which would obviously make the existence of women's sports unaffordable, or else income drawn from men's sports would have to be used to pay the women athletes. Women would therefore be dependent on men, financially and professionally, and the irony would be complete.

The same process has occurred in various professions in the United States, now the global leader in the crusade against masculinity. Pharmacy, public relations, banking, and insurance sales are only a few examples of once male professions that have since lost both social status and earning power by being feminized.

One should note, however, that feminization stops before it reaches the top. The professions mentioned above, not to mention the world of sports, are still 'owned' and managed almost entirely by men.

Nor is this all a question of male chauvinism, since it is not a question of male attitudes alone. The social prestige in question is also a representation of female attitudes. Women tend to have higher respect for male pursuits than female ones and if there are vocations they despise, they are the traditional female roles. How

many feminists today would show due respect for the *mother* who actually, really, throughout every day and not just on weekends, chooses to raise her own children? The homemaker, the female vocation par excellence, is for feminists today not even a valid pursuit. Needless to say, no man has ever despised a woman for being a wife and a mother. It is women who despise women for being 'dependent' on men, and it is the men, on the contrary, who without complaint support them through a lifetime of labor.

Nietzsche was describing the situation well when he wrote: "And isn't it true that, speaking generally, 'woman' up to this point has been held in contempt mostly by woman herself - and not at all by us?...And I think that a true friend of women is the man who nowadays shouts out to them: *mulier taceat de muliere* [let woman be silent about women]!"[3]

Thus, one reason that we might argue against female participation in the military is that women themselves will lose respect for the military, and not just women but society in general, since that is what history suggests to us as the consequence of promoting mixed military and co-ed combat.

### *World War II and the nuclear stalemate.*

We have already discussed how the influx of women into a vocation implies a decrease in the social significance of that vocation, whether that takes the form of prestige or salary or male participation. The same phenomenon is true of the influx of women into the military, but why did this occur at a certain point in history and not another? What factors made it the opportune moment, or: what was the military context that made it seem reasonable to pursue such a radical social experiment? Nuclear weapons provide us with the answer.

As is generally acknowledged, the entrance of nuclear weapons on the global stage and on the battlefield rendered the battlefield itself almost obsolete. To put it in the simplest possible way: major interstate war became impossible, rendering conventional military power almost irrelevant, virtually excluding any major ground conflict between developed countries on par with the World Wars,

[3] *Beyond Good and Evil*, 232.

and in view of the ensuring irrelevance of conventional armed forces, women were allowed to join their ranks.

In addition, there were the experiences of total war, involving the incorporation of the entirety of the national strength for the war effort. Indeed it would be incorrect to say that nuclear weapons alone made possible the entrance of women into the military since they participated extensively during World War II, particularly in Great Britain. Their performance, which was excellent, inspired various leaders to pay them overstated compliments for their service, often going so far as to say that women helped win the war 'equally' with men.

Eisenhower who grew to the height of his military prestige said:

> "Until my experience in London I had been opposed to the use of women in uniform. But in Great Britain I had seen them perform so magnificently in various positions, including serving in active anti-aircraft batteries, that I had been converted."

Of those in the military with misgivings, Eisenhower said:

> "What these men had failed to note was the changing requirements of war. The simple headquarters of a Grant or Lee were gone forever. An army of filing clerks, stenographers, office managers, telephone operators, and chauffeurs had become essential, and it was scarcely less than criminal to recruit these from needed manpower when great numbers of highly qualified women were available…Toward the end of the war the most stubborn die-hards had become convinced - and demanded them in increasing numbers."[4]

The attitude of the future president was shared by much of the leadership after the war ended, and so we can see that by the time the atomic bombs were dropped, the wheels were already set in motion. We can see from the selection that Eisenhower had in mind primarily an "army of filing clerks, stenographers, and office managers" and that he likely would not have been able to foresee where things would end.

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[4] Dwight D. Eisenhower*, Crusade in Europe*, 1948.

Does the fact that women served well and were 'essential' mean they sacrificed equally? The general attitude, or at least the lip service used by politicians and the public monuments seem to suggest that they have. After Vietnam, men and women each received a monument to their sacrifice in the war, each monument showing three figures. Equality all around. But in Vietnam there were 57,000 male deaths, compared to only 8 female deaths.

Again, without disrespecting the service of women in World War II, or Vietnam for that matter, which by all accounts is always beyond reproach, the body count in every war should be enough to demonstrate that war demands sacrifices from everyone but for men it asks them to sacrifice not just labor but life and limb, and the terrible butcher's bill for war is met almost exclusively by men. Women paid in sweat and tears, but when it was time to pay in blood, it was the blood of men.

It was after the war in 1948 when the United States Congress would hold official hearings on the subject, and these would result in the enactment of Public Law 625 which made permanent what was the result of a world emergency, and women were allowed to take positions in the armed forces with strict limits. These limits would later be dropped one by one as so many forms of discrimination, but they included: no women in combat, no women on navy vessels, or flying duty. Also, women were not allowed to command men.

In summary, we can say that two things led to the radical integration of women into the military: first, their integration as a kind of 'global necessity' during WWII, and second, the development of nuclear weapons, which created an unprecedented situation implying unprecedented military irrelevance. Both of these made possible an unprecedented feminization of the armed forces even to the point of participation in combat units.

### *The case of Israel and the conscription of women.*

American conservatives love to romanticize Israel for a set of reasons that it is not our purpose here to discuss. What we do wish to point out is that in some progressive circles, Israel also becomes a favorite topic due to the fact that it is the only country in history to conscript women and force them to wear a military uniform with or without their voluntary consent. The idea is that Israel proves that women are fit for combat and the Israelis, being 'realists' give women the equal treatment they deserve, at least on this point.

The problem with the argument is that until very recently, no Israeli woman had served in combat since the war of independence in 1948, and this in spite of the fact that the IDF has faced overwhelming odds and had all the incentive in the world to move women into combat units. In other words until recently, Israeli women were never intentionally exposed to the risks of combat.

As for participation in 1948, women served in the Palmach, which was an underground paramilitary force. Their missions were undercover, which again is typical when women participate in these circumstances, usually involving smuggling weapons, surveillance, or delivering messages. Even in the rare instances when the Palmach took up arms in the form of an assault, the women were left behind.

After winning independence women were immediately excluded from combat in the IDF. Women still serve and are drafted into the IDF, but the role has historically been to provide auxiliary services similar to what women performed for Great Britain in World War II. Nothing so radical as what the progressives arguing for women in combat would like to think. Additionally, the IDF never had mixed sex units like the American model. Women had their separate corps, which was called CHEN. Women there were subject to other women, as was the case in the early days of women in the United States military. Nor were these women treated as men, and there are voluminous procedural and disciplinary materials to show that the IDF took care to make sure that women were protected from any kind of unpleasant treatment from men. Namely, they could not be touched by male MPs or disciplined by men.

Nor were they put through the same training as male draftees. Their basic training was shorter and their weapons training almost a formality. Women also typically served 2 years instead of 3 (the male term). Women who were married, pregnant, or have children are exempt from the draft. Women were also not re-drafted for service after a first term, whereas men must continue to serve until age 51.

Eventually the effects of the nuclear stalemate have begun to make themselves felt in the Israeli military as in all the other developed countries, as well as the decrease in prestige that comes from a feminized and irrelevant armed force: men no longer enlist, and recruiters panic. When recruiters panic, they turn to women for salvation. In this regard, America did not follow Israel as an example, but the reverse. Recently the IDF has begun to more

closely resemble the situation that Americans imagined it always was.

### *The consequences of integration.*

By the end of Vietnam the 2 percent cap on women in the armed forces was lifted. The military was in need of manpower, and much of it could be supplied by women. The term for job roles in the military is “Military Occupational Specialties” or “MOS”. Originally there were few that women could perform, but the continuous feminization of the military meant that more and more MOS would be opened. Women began filling in the gaps as men became less satisfied with the pay the military offered, which was for the women an improvement. Thus we see again that the pay gap is not so much closed as it is a matter of chasing men up the ladder and filling in where they have already departed.

In 1972, one in thirty recruits were female; in 1976 it was one in thirteen. To accommodate this influx and succeed in expanding the roles women could perform, all of the old restrictions had to be abolished. Women were officially allowed on ships and to pilot aircraft, although for a while yet they were not to be allowed on combat vessels or aircraft. For the first time, they received weapons training. For the first time, they were allowed to command mixed units containing both men and women.

The shift toward ‘equality’ continued under the Carter administration. The idea was to pursue a true unisex armed force and so the women’s corps was abolished and female soldiers fully mixed with male in one chain of command. Instead of separate buildings they occupied separate floors in the same building on the same base.

The experiment was therefore underway, and it did not take long for it to encounter obstacles. Simply put, physical issues consistently prevent women from training as hard as men, due to the differences between male and female physiology. Training devices that depend on a certain minimum of upper body strength, like monkey bars, had to be eliminated. Even today in the Marines, the standard requirements for pull ups for women are less than half of the male requirement. Women often cannot climb ropes. They struggle to throw heavy grenades the minimum safe distance and recently it was announced that the Army will no longer enforce those standards, since too many recruits simply cannot meet them.

Needless to say, the dream of integrated training where women demonstrate that they are equal to men, side by side, led to women either suffering injury, or dropping out, or else changing the standards and procedures so that the training, for men, was reduced to a kind of charade.

It should also be mentioned that prolonged, strenuous physical training can have negative consequences for the female body. Women reportedly have lost their periods for spans of time. This loss of ovulation and menstrual cycle is called amenorrhea and without treatment could lead to long-term sterility.

Even with reduced standards it was found that women were still injured twice as often as men, and if not injured, visited the doctor more often. They are five times as likely to suffer fractures, ten times as likely to experience stress fractures, which leads to exponentially more days of limited duty due to a long list of ailments like shin splints and tendonitis.

All of this did not do much for the male ego, and attitudes toward female recruits reflected this resentment. Men often made this resentment known and rightly gave women hell for their troubles. Other times men showed compassion and helped make up the difference. On some marches and in the performance of routine chores, if women could not keep up then the men nearby picked up the slack. But however men responded, whether through kindness or cruelty, the effectiveness of the armed forces deteriorated.

### *The myth of the platonic or 'professional' relationship.*

Only in the modern de-sexed world could it become commonplace for girls to 'prefer guy friends'. We have all met young women who are always in the company of a group of men, and it may be justified because they identify as a 'tomboy' or because they don't like how emotional the other women are, or whatever. Yet most men read this instinctively as a red flag and understand that such a woman is an aberration and is likely to use the men she meets to satisfy a need for male attention, and to make up for her inability to identify with members of her own sex. In other words, it signifies an imbalance in the same way that we'd perceive an imbalance in the man who said he 'preferred to have girls for friends'. The reasons for such preferences might be different, but for both men and women the perception (even if we can't say it) is the same: there's something off about that individual.

First we can say that the norm for association between men and women is not platonic. When men and women approach each other, it is either because they cannot avoid it (for example as a necessity in the workplace) or else it is with *interest*. If it is a willing association, then the default is *interest of some kind*. Friendship, which is so often claimed by these women between themselves and their male 'friends', is itself a kind of emotional attraction. Thus, friendship between males, although they'd never describe it this way, is a platonic love for another man, with its own kind of attraction. To pretend that such an 'emotional attraction' between a man and a woman, even if it resembles friendship, does not naturally become more than that if pursued, is to embrace naivety.

The problem with forced association through co-ed work environments is that they display this same naivety. Even if there is no interest, but you force men and women into close association, interest is bound to appear, since that is what positive attraction between the sexes becomes. The contrary is of course no less desirable, which is that there will be negative emotion between co-workers, and conflict will ensue.

If no interest exists on the part of the woman, she very often perceives the interest on the part of the man, and she enjoys the validation she receives from his attention. Hence the manners and customs of traditional society that allowed men to 'pay their respects' and show affection to women even in casual settings through a kiss on the hand or a compliment. These tools today would fit the category of harassment.

When sexes are mixed virtually everywhere, the normative presence of interest is hidden or at least we are desensitized to it by over-exposure. Men for their part, who have the responsibility of initiating relations with women, have been scared out of their minds (literally) by society and have learned to more or less lie to themselves about the nature of their attitudes toward women, and even those who are honest with themselves must become very good at performing the charade in order to continue to function in a professional capacity.

The one escape from this madness was, for a time, the military, the military being insulated as far as possible from egalitarian propaganda and emphasizing, on the contrary, the opposite. Male organizations, in fact, despise egalitarianism since it denies them

any opportunity for victory, since victory implies the presence of the vanquished.

More will be said on some of these remarks below, but for now the point is that *the woman who pursues the company of men is abnormal*, and even if she is not necessarily imbalanced, she should certainly not be taken as the norm for her sex. In many cases she is behaving in a parasitic and sociopathic manner by enjoying the continuous attentions and validations of men without any of the vulnerability that is asked of other women, nor can her presence avoid destabilizing the group or at least altering its spirit, since the presence of a woman automatically alters the nature of such groups. The more women who are added to the picture, the less the alteration is felt, to the point that it can be denied entirely, and the men shamed for even thinking that something might have been taken from them.

The nature of the sexes is such that platonic relationships are a fantasy of bureaucrats with assembly line brains and ideologues who only see humanity in the neuter. How many marriages have been destroyed, how many potential families have been precluded, how many work environments have been poisoned---all by the obstinate denial of these basic facts, we will never know. How much violence has been done to the military by the same denial, we will soon see.

### *Pregnant soldiers and the privilege of desertion.*

All soldiers may experience problems that prevent them from being deployed, in other words problems that render them useless for service, but women experience more of them and more often. One estimate is that they are actually four times more likely to experience an issue of this kind. Pregnancy, traditionally the crowning glory of femininity, is certainly on that list.

One of the conundrums we face immediately when admitting women into the military is the fact that no policy and no prescription pill will stop them from becoming pregnant, either intentionally or not. Some 40 percent of active duty service members reported becoming pregnant after enlistment. 1 in 15 reported that the pregnancy was unexpected, which means that women in the military actually show less and not more precaution with regard to sex, since of the general population only 1 in 20 are unexpected pregnancies.

Even in the context of easy and reliable birth control, pregnancy still occurs among women in the military, and if these positions are just 'jobs' on par with the other 'professions', why shouldn't they? In other words, the only way to remove this issue would be to sterilize women or force them to take birth control, which is rightly considered to be offensive even in theory, and in practice it would be impossible. Once pregnancy occurs, women cannot be easily punished for it, even if it occurs during a deployment when it is of the utmost importance that they remain physically capable of performing in the field.

One example of problematic integration would be in the 1990s when women were for the first time allowed aboard warships. The *USS Eisenhower* (ironically) became the site of the first major naval experiment in integration. The total crew was 4,967 and was to include 415 women on its voyage. Before things could even begin, millions had to be spent to adjust accommodations. Gynecologists were brought onboard, and plenty of contraceptives. Menus were altered. Copious regulations for what might and might not be done between men and women were drafted. All of this, and thirty-nine of the women became pregnant on the cruise, causing them to be sent off. That's almost 10 percent of the total number of women brought on board.

An interesting point about this scenario is that by becoming willfully pregnant a woman can effectively have herself sent home at any time. Women are seemingly immune to the traditional penalties for desertion, and can desert almost at will. A man would have to shoot himself in the foot to be sent home, and if anyone suspected he did it on purpose, he'd suffer consequences, but no one is going to jail an expecting mother for such a mishap.

When the United States prepared to deploy troops to the Gulf in Operation Desert Shield they discovered, to their dismay, that there were thousands of military parents (most of them single parents) who simply were not ready and had no arrangements for child care. If this seems like it would apply to men as well as women, it need only be pointed out that women are 7 times more likely to be single parents than men. Obviously it would be a PR nightmare to tear mothers aways and leave their children unattended simply because the parents had forgotten that they were not working for 'just another company' but were in fact subject to deployment at virtually any time. After that experience the military stopped accepting single

parents (at least to a degree, since the recruiters still have to meet their quotas). Many bases established or already had established day care facilities. One wonders how it makes sense for the military to pay one employee to watch the child of another employee so that the second employee can function, but that is a dilemma the modern economy suffers from in a general way. Ever since women entered the workforce children have been shuffled around in this irrational manner, mothers paying other women to mother their children for them. Women vie for the right to have a career while pursuing the mutually exclusive vocation of parenthood.

Women should never be subject to conscription, but the very fact that women cannot be conscripted in any developed country except Israel means that, when they voluntarily enlist, then what for men has always been a duty becomes for women a privilege to be exercised according to their own personal desires. That fact alone places women in an advantaged position over men, since the 'at will' employee cannot be disciplined in the same manner as the soldier who cannot simply quit, and who can be jailed for trying.

When the female recruit becomes pregnant, gives birth, and returns to service as a mother, and especially if the cycle continues more than once, her body does not retain all of its vigor. Any of the physical discrepancies that were mentioned above that disadvantage women may become exacerbated after the birth of a child. Childbirth alters the body of the mother forever, sometimes drastically, sometimes minimally, but the body does not emerge unchanged.

### *The privileged sex.*

Looking at the situation objectively, one wonders if it is not women who are the privileged sex after all. The first sign of profound social privilege can be seen in their gaining the right to vote. Voting rights, historically speaking, came at a serious cost to men. If men wanted to 'self-rule' then they had to accept the responsibility to wage war, which was traditionally the responsibility of the rulers. Thus, the ballot and the soldier's pack were accepted at one stroke. That is why in democratic regimes, conscription or 'the draft' is considered justifiable.

Women, more recently, have been given the right to vote, but they were never burdened with the duty that theoretically ought to have accompanied that right. This phenomenon whereby women

discover they can 'have their political cake and eat it too' continues to be reflected in military developments.

Again, if they had been subject to the draft, then it would not be a privilege. Since feminists have never argued that women be subject to the draft, but that they be allowed to voluntarily participate at will in whatever role they seek, then the feminist argument amounts not to equality but a privileged position, and it has been achieved, along with many others. For example the idea that women can perform in combat roles. Each time the argument is presented, it is presented as if women ought to be able to volunteer for combat, and not that women ought to be pressed to kill and be killed. Again, they seem to forget that for men this is not a privilege but a duty.

We already mentioned the difficulty in disciplining women for sexual misconduct, but it turned out that women's privileged status extended to *discipline in general*. Already in World War I, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels said that women ought never to be court marshaled--*for anything*. After all, he said, we "cannot deal with women as with men". This became a tradition, both in Britain and the US, and even in Russia it would have been unusual to see a woman under military arrest. The worst that can happen seems to be a dishonorable discharge and so again we get the impression that a woman may desert at will.

The privilege extends even to the superficial. Women are allowed to keep their hair and wear some jewellery.

Military life in general is softened for women, where they are allowed a gentler basic training with lower standards and may proceed on to a more comfortable MOS afterward.

Much more difficult to quantify would be the additional cost to men when they have to compensate for the weaknesses of the women.

If men retain even a shred of grace and decency in these situations, they find themselves mysteriously stuck with all of the heavier, dirtier work. When they'd have no qualms about pushing a man to pull his own weight, how many men would not help a woman in need of assistance? How many men found themselves doing their own arduous tasks and then helping to make up the difference for someone else's? How many women serve in roles that, without help from the men, they could not complete even on a good day?

### *Sexual harassment and sexism.*

Having already mentioned the naivety of the 'integrationists' who treat sexuality like an optional accessory and not a fundamental human reality, and also the delicate privilege maintained by women everywhere in modern society but in the military in particular, it will not surprise us when we come to the epidemic of sexual harassment.

Foul language and physical intimidation are standard tools in the military. They are of the nature of the beast, and war is a beast. If the organization did not introduce recruits to the ugliest side of human nature, even introducing trauma in a controlled way, they would be doing them an injustice. The problem is that many of these techniques, traditions, practices, behaviors--whatever we want to call them--are not appropriate to both sexes. They were developed over centuries *with men in mind*. One cannot perform the invasive and emotionally manipulative actions necessary to mold a recruit and at the same time make sure they are not making the females present uncomfortable. To insult a man's genitalia or make remarks about his sex life might be a means to an emotional end, a welcome means that humbles him without wounding him and teaches him the nature of discipline and hierarchy. The same remark in front of a woman, much less directed at a woman, could now end a man's military career.

It is not so much that all military men are innocent, but that the military atmosphere is *necessarily* antagonistic to the decorum which makes possible a respectful coexistence between the sexes. The capacity for polite 'civility' which holds at bay the violence in man, is the very thing that military conditions are trying to get past, at least temporarily and in its own way, so that there is no place here for ideas about the politically correct, and certainly not for gender-related *sensitivity*. It is not so much that real sexual harassment does not occur, for undoubtedly it does, but that in many ways the very form and technique of the institution, designed around the male psyche, deal harassment as a necessary part of its technique. Nor can it be adjusted to become gender neutral. It works on the psyche and the body, and both of these are sexually differentiated. Thus, training must take for granted either the male or the female person. If the latter, it falls apart completely. If the former, then it will inevitably appear "sexist" when women are grafted into it. Such things will occur without any special malice on the part of officers and fellow recruits.

Everyone who has ever been around fresh recruits knows that the way they talk is vulgar, and so they will naturally sound like perverts, some of them, to any women present, but the presence of women in an environment like that is already perverse. The real perversity is the refusal to grant men the exclusive use of this space, this exclusivity being necessary to the task at hand.

We have been discussing the training environment required in order to produce combat soldiers, and how it must allow for the fact that it is working on the male psyche first and foremost. We do not mean to suggest that civility and decorum need to be excluded from the military in general. Even if the Israel's IDF, where women are conscripted, a degree of decorum has historically been present, and it is said that many young men find their first sexual partners while serving, and that these might turn into marriages. The same was true of the women who served for the British in anti-aircraft batteries. Dwight Eisenhower, who spoke so highly of the women he encountered in military service is said to have had one such love affair with his chauffeur (who later was his personal secretary).

The point here is that it is not that men and women cannot come into contact at all in the military context, but that this contact is poisoned under the influence of modern ways of thinking that treat mankind as a neuter and promote ridiculous expectations. When the differences between men and women were highlighted, even insisted upon, and the possibility of romance acknowledged as not just a remote and unfortunate possibility but as a necessary consequence of mixed sex environments, mutual respect was still possible. Men were even willing to grant women the traditional privileges of their sex, since they understood that it might come with the reward of respect, attention, and even affection. All of that has now been thrown to the wind, and the most a man can expect if he treats women as women is an awkward tolerance at best, and at worst a sexual harassment case that ends his career.

If 2 percent participation in the armed forces results in numerous desirable or undesirable sexual contacts, the growing influx of women into the military (now at 17 percent) could only be expected to increase these instances exponentially. When this situation was combined with sexual harassment laws enacted in the 60s it should have been no surprise to anyone that a flood of complaints, lawsuits, and terrible PR would follow. The problem was worsened when the definition of what constituted sexual harassment was expanded.

Originally it was somewhat limited to cut and dried instances of a superior using his authority to try and coerce a subordinate to perform sexual favors. In the 70s and 80s, however, the meaning became much more open-ended to the point where sexual harassment might occur in the absence of any physical contact and even if it did not involve the use of pressure or authority in any way. In other words, almost anything a woman chose to interpret as an uninvited advance could potentially be construed as harassment.

Again, referring to what we said above regarding vulgarity and physical intimidation as *necessary conditions* for the development of effective combat soldiers, it is difficult to see how instructors could remain effective in their roles and yet remain sufficiently sensitive to the increasing number of women in the ranks.

By the 1990s things had gotten even worse, and sexual harassment had given way to sexism. In other words, a term that referred to an incident was expanded by adding to it an '-ism' that referred not to any particular act but to 'beliefs' and 'attitudes'. There would be sexism of commission, in other words doing something that was found offensive to women, and there would be sexism of omission, or not doing something that might be found affirming. One could not categorize women, objectify them, subjectify them. One could not single them out or 'discriminate' against them, but neither could they be ignored.

All of this brings two problems to the fore:

1) Women really do need protection, by men, from other men. If they demand exposure to men in chaotic environments on the grounds that they are equal to men, they inevitably fall back on some other authority for protection, in this case the legal system.

2) An environment that rests on discipline, it is utterly destructive to introduce a group that is more or less immune to many of its forms, whether through natural processes like pregnancy, or through legal interference and intimidation. The contrary effect will be that the individuals who are still subject to hard discipline (the men, in this case) will become resentful, and this will be expressed even to the point of cruelty.

In the end, the consequences are obvious. Men will opt out. They will find other things to do, other means of asserting their masculinity. More women will then be recruited, and probably

praised for 'picking up the slack' for men who will be presented as less disciplined, less patriotic, or whatever. The cycle through which women enter, prestige decreases, men evacuate, and the institution dies, will proceed. Thankfully this is not as serious of a problem as we might expect, given the decreasing importance of national armed forces in developed countries. It is a game that women will win only to discover that the men stopped playing, because winning no longer matters.

### *Alternative career paths for the male soldier.*

Let's say you live in the United States and have a son who seems to be called to the military vocation. How could you counsel him to enter into an armed service that has become a politically manipulated social experiment, where he may have his whole career short-circuited by one foul step, and not just with regard to women. In the year 2024 that foul step might involve something so bizarre as mis-gendering a fellow male wants to be called 'she', or some other choice-based pronoun. Things are going to get worse before they get better, so what of the young man who wishes to pursue the vocation of the warrior?

The solution has begun to present itself, and was presenting itself as early as Iraq, by the participation of private security firms in international conflicts. The name Blackwater made headlines for a while and caused controversy in some circles, since what is in question is basically the return of mercenary armies fighting on behalf of their wealthy patrons. It isn't new, historically, but it seems odd in the modern world where for so long the nation-state has claimed a total monopoly on killing. Now, as the nuclear stalemate renders the largest conventional militaries irrelevant, these "Private Military Companies" or "PMCs" are re-entering the picture.

More recently, the Russian PMC, Wager Group, has been operating in Ukraine but has been around for years. In their present form they are sometimes traced back to WatchGuard International, a security group founded in 1965 by ex-SAS veterans.

The Geneva Conventions do not consider mercenaries to be legitimate combatants but given the fact that they are returning to the battlefield anyway, that might change, and maybe for the better.

We do not intend to get deep into a discussion of these groups here, but only wish to point out that they are and will likely remain

somewhat immune to the 'social experimentation' that prevails in government military work. They will be able to retain the true military mentality, even to the point that they will fight absent 'patriotism' and national feeling--these latter being also the products of the modern world.

As men lose interest in fighting for state bureaucracies due to their inept politics and degrading treatment of military men, those who are looking for more than college tuition and medical coverage will flock to PMCs. Of course there will still be many, many people who accept the current sales pitch offered by the US military advertising campaigns and enlist because they just want 'employment', and at least in the United States, military service does accrue immediate benefits and, in most places, a degree of social respect, free dinners, priority placement for doctor's appointments, etc. But those who are looking for a means of proving themselves in the ultimate trial against other men will look outside the conventional military, and options will likely become more widely available in the years ahead.